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# **Technology and the Local Church: A Planning and Utilization Manual**

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**February, 2001**

**In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Doctor of Ministry**

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Due to extenuating circumstances, final edits were not completed for this project.

Sample

Abstract

MY STORY: AN ADVENTURE IN HEARING AND TELLING

A Christian Education Curriculum for Young Adults

by

Robert James Burns Jr.

Young adults have, for the most part, been absent from most mainline Protestant churches for the last three decades. This absence stems in part from emphasis on church growth directed at families with young children, and in part from a lack of recognition on the part of local churches that young adults have changed from one generation to the next. There is a growing awareness of the unique characteristics of the thirteenth generation which comprise most of today's young adult population, although almost no curriculum resources have been designed for use with these unchurched young adults.

Storytelling is emerging in general education as well as religious education as an instructional method. Biblical storytelling is an effective way to communicate tradition as well as address the specific needs of young adults such as need for community, feelings of isolation, and an understanding of self-worth and value. Ministry to young adults in the thirteenth generation is not only mandated by the Great Commandment, but it also is a necessity if the Church is to transform into an organization that can remain viable in the twenty-first century.

This project develops a curriculum for unchurched young adults for use as an extension ministry of the local church. The focus is on persons born between 1961 and 1981 who have no connection with the Church. Characteristics of this unique generation are presented along with faith development models in order to design a curriculum that

will meet the needs and developmental stages of young adults. Biblical stories are chosen that address the issues that seem most often to surface in analysis of this young adult audience. Development of a storytelling theology is presented and biblical exegesis and exposition of the stories used in the curriculum is provided as a study guide. Suggestions for implementing the use of the curriculum, in order to reach young adults outside the church, are provided in the concluding chapter.

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## Chapter 1

### Celebrating the Stories: Theology and Technology

We live in times when talk of the decline in church membership, at least in the mainline denominations, is commonplace.

Mainline Protestant denominations have been in steady decline for nearly a generation. In contrast to receiving a new member group of 62 people, most pastors today rejoice if they are able to welcome a half dozen new members, and more often than not, these new members are apt to be transfers from other churches, not new recruits professing faith for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

Much has been written on the subject and many reasons have been suggested for the decline. Some have attributed the problem to a general shift away from religious concerns on the part of Americans. Others have pointed to rapidly growing non-denominational churches and suggested a return to more “conservative” values. Still others have said the decline is largely due to the fact that worship styles have not materially changed in hundreds of years and have, therefore, not kept up with a rapidly changing society. I believe the latter thought hits closest to the mark.

Congregations need to change the way they do things if they are going to reach and hold onto the new generations. This especially true about worship styles.<sup>2</sup>

It may well be that the willingness to try new ways of doing things is the only thing that will reverse the steady decline. “Where there is no vision the people perish.”<sup>3</sup>

We live in a world that we have come to understand as perpetually changing. From instant to instant nothing remains the same in modern society. Change is so

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<sup>1</sup> Roger S. Nicholson, ed., Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry (Baltimore: The Alban Institute, 1989), ix. (Washington, D.C.: Alban Institute, 1998), ix

<sup>2</sup> Nicholson, x.

<sup>3</sup> Proverbs 29:18 KJV.

omnipresent that it is easy to miss the impact on institutions such as the local church, but the impact is there and dwindling numbers in attendance on Sunday morning offer ample testimony to this fact. The dilemma is centered on how to maintain faithful worship of God and provide an environment that is compatible with a society that is constantly in the process of becoming something new.

### **A Theological Perspective**

The church is called to reach out to the world to convey the news of God's love and presence in the world. The church is also called to minister to the needs of its membership. And to accomplish those goals the church must understand its own history and traditions. The history and traditions referred to here are those of an individual congregation. What seems to be needed is a theology of the local church that provides for celebration of the history of the local congregation as a means of building the means to speak internally to that faith community and externally to the world beyond.

A theology that under girds the constant need to adapt to a changing society can be built based on Process theology. Process theology (hereinafter simply "Process") is built on the philosophical model developed by Alfred North Whitehead. While the full model is complex and designed to encompass the entire physical universe, elements of Whitehead's philosophy have emerged as a well established theological position that is very useful in describing the task of the local church.

In Process terms the local church is an *actual entity*. An actual entity may be thought of as a basic unit that becomes what it is based on the influences of its past and the *initial aim* of God. The initial aim is God's lure toward the best the entity – the local church – may become. The other influences are made up of the totality of the history of

that church, every tradition, plan, accomplishment, and failure, virtually every detail of its previous existence. Those influences help to shape the church to define it in the present moment. But a church also has the opportunity to make choices about what it will become. God has blessed the creation with freedom to choose and to work with God and our collective histories to build the best that may yet be. It can truly be said that God and what has gone before in history prepare the church, but the church will decide what it will become. God's role lies in helping turn the possibility into reality. This is a dynamic theology as opposed to a theology that regards the church as static, unchanging in a creation that is ever changing. It is a theology of a church in process of becoming, a process that never ends. It is, in short, a new church with new possibility in every moment.

There are many positive things that a church might do in exercising the gift of freedom to create with God's help a robust future. But if the church is to succeed, the church must be prepared to define itself to its membership and to the world. That definition is the product of the history of the church expressed in the faith journeys of its members, the record of accomplishments that exert pressure for repeating those successes. Even the failures and catastrophes that are parts of the church becoming what it can be. In other words, the history of the church is everything that the church ever was.

The theological issue now becomes one of discovering the past and of preserving the present that will become, in the next moment, the past. The more that the church understands about where it has been, the more it will be able to respond to God's aim toward its maximum potential. Therefore, a first theological step for a local church is to discover its own history. For the ancient Jews wandering in the wilderness the

maintenance of history became much of what we read in the Old Testament. That record is fragmented, often obscure, and difficult to use as a means of fully understanding the early traditions of the people who gathered below God's holy mountain to receive the covenant. But the modern church has available tools never imagined until just a few years ago. Those tools are found in the vast modern toolbox called communications technology.

### **A Social Perspective**

One cannot help but wonder how it is that the public can spend so much per household for commonplace electronic devices such as computers, television sets, video cassette recorders and even video cameras while churches have consistently ignored the use of these means of communication. The issue is particularly striking when one considers that movable type – high technology in Guttenberg's day – was eagerly embraced as a means of bringing the word of God to the people. Are there really any churches that do not make use of the printed word? The adoption of printed materials happened at some point in time and it is time for the consideration of adoption of new materials in a society that already has embraced those materials.

The *local* church needs to begin adopting and using technological means of enhancing local ministry. There is not a pressing need for some sort of mega delivery system designed to reach everyone on the planet. Systems that are supposedly capable of doing that sort of broad stroke ministry ultimately fail because they cannot hope to represent the viewpoint of each individual congregation.

In fact, in mainline denominations such as the United Church of Christ, with a long-standing tradition of congregational autonomy, the use of technology for large-scale

evangelism is almost sure to misrepresent the local church. While there are some legitimate religious uses of the mass communication technologies, notably broadcast and wide-area cable, these uses are relatively few compared with the local usefulness of other available technology.

While there are opportunities for extending the reach of a local congregation using such means as a local access channel on the cable system serving a given community, such undertakings are expensive and time consuming.

Cable companies are not obliged to provide any studio facilities, equipment or training for them unless it is written into the terms of the franchise. Making programs is therefore a costly affair, involves learning technical skills and demands a great deal of time. Unless reasons for getting involved are clearly worked out from the very start, many people fall by the wayside when the novelty wears off.<sup>4</sup>

I spent many years negotiating, or supervising negotiations, with cable companies. Even in those cases where regulations demanded that a station be carried, the process of bringing that about was arduous at best. In an era when channel capacity is valuable due to the incredible number of program services available, the survival of community access channels becomes more and more questionable.

There are vigorous efforts to protect local access to cable systems, but local negotiation is an ever present issue and may be difficult for a church in the community.

Programming efforts of churches at local level often cross-fertilize with the lively citizens' access movement in the U.S. Successful action on access tends to be patchy because cable is regulated primarily by states and cities rather than by the federal government, and access is therefore a matter of negotiations between municipalities and individual cable operators. Still, when the agreed franchise does call on the cable operator to provide access channels for the local community, cable has turned teachers, nurses, students, elderly citizens and clergy into TV producers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Kathy Lowe, Opening Eyes and Ears (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1983), 54.

The danger is as Lowe describes it. There is a very real lure to being "on the air" which may tempt a local church to seek access to a cable system. That course of action should not be undertaken lightly. It is also possible that the problem of gaining cable access may be compounded by the presence of multiple cable operators in the area served by the church. This could happen, for example, if a local church serves two adjoining communities.

### **Add Does Not Mean Eliminate**

In what follows I advocate the use of technology to enhance what a local church already does without suggesting that a local church needs to go as far as broadcasting, including cable television. I am not saying that mass media are always ineffective or otherwise inappropriate for a local church to consider. However, those churches are relatively few and tend to be large, urban, and already maximally engaged in successful ministry to their immediate area. I urge that churches adopt the technology that they can successfully use and avoid the risk of adopting technology well beyond either need or resources.

It is also important to note that the word "adopt" is not a synonym for the word "replace." While it is not uncommon to replace a set of hymnals when a new edition is adopted and purchased, the adoption of technology by a local congregation does not mean there will be a used hymnal sale, or that the hymnals will gather dust because of discontinued use. Rather the hymnal will take on a new role, an expanded role, as the images of even the most traditional music are made visual in a technology project. The same point can be made with regard to any other element of traditional worship or broader church life; the use of technology does not automatically replace existing means

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<sup>5</sup> Lowe, 46.

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of doing things. Rather, the use of technology increases the options and presents a new and richer menu of experiences to the congregation.

But it would be unreasonable to claim that the presence of a technological item on the menu of church capabilities will not sometimes result in reallocation of resources. It is important that planning for technology acknowledge this fact. This topic is dealt with later. It is also true that something new brings resistance because new means change. Human beings, as a very general rule, do not like change. Church communities are tradition sensitive and therefore very unlikely to view changes in worship practices or other activities without at least some degree of suspicion. Of course there are always those persons who seem to delight in change. They will see an opportunity and be anxious to get going on the new project. It is important that technological zealots be reminded that their point of view, while important, is not the only point of view in the church and that change may come slower than at zealot speed.

One way to begin thinking about the process of adding a technological component to the life of the local church is to consider whether or not Jesus might have been inclined toward the use of a video camera had one been available during his ministry. The thought might be amusing to pursue for a while, but an example of what Jesus did so well is useful at this point. Jesus told stories. He was apparently a master storyteller because so much has been “recorded” of what he said. Not only were his stories recalled but they have been subjected to the most extensive examination of any set of sayings ever uttered. There has probably never been a student of exegesis who has not thought how simple it would all be if we just knew what the thinking was behind the passage. (Technology will never replace exegesis, nor should it!) Technology can often make



clear the intent of what was said long after the subject person is gone. By way of example, we can look at how challenging has been the task of preserving stories in a pre-technological time.

### A Historical Perspective

Many so-called primitive societies were accomplished at the art of story telling. The use of oral transmission as a means of passing on history and culture is well documented. In unknown numbers those traditional tales have not survived, but in other cases the telling of personal stories has been preserved for the delight, inspiration, and instruction of future generations. One such preserved account, alas before easily used recording technology, is the story of Black Elk.

Black Elk, with his near-blind stare fixed on the ground, seemed to have forgotten us. I was about to break the silence by way of getting something started, when the old man looked up to Flying Hawk, the interpreter, and said (speaking Sioux, for he knew no English): "As I sit here, I can feel in this man beside me a strong desire to know the things of the Other World. He has been sent to learn what I know, and I will teach him."<sup>6</sup>

In recalling his conversation with Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux holy man, John Neihardt provides us with several reasons for preserving our stories so that they may be celebrated as part of congregational life.

First, we should note that Black Elk knew he was nearing the end of his life and needed to share his story while he could. "Soon I shall be under the grass and it will be lost."<sup>7</sup> There is a need to preserve the stories that are a congregation's past while there is still time. That is not a morbid thought, but a recognition that at some point it will be too late and so we are wise not to put off preserving our history.

~~Black Elk~~ oops! OK - page nos. are to intro or preface.  
<sup>6</sup> John G. Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), xvii.  
<sup>7</sup> Neihardt, xviii.

Second, Black Elk was aware of the interest in his story. That is important. The willingness of members of a congregation to engage in sharing their faith journey, their personal memories, and their stories is enabled by our interest in hearing them. People respond warmly to the kind interest of others and afterward, after the story is captured for posterity, people respond with delight to the shared memory because it is personal, it is by and about a real person. If part of the tradition of our church is to welcome the opportunities for sharing of the past, then the riches of our collective past will be available for the present and the future. God's lure toward what may be is enriched by our experience of what has been.

We also see in Neihardt's recollection of his initial meeting with Black Elk that an obstacle needed to be overcome. Black Elk needed to speak through an interpreter because Neihardt could not understand Sioux. It is certainly conceivable that language can be an obstacle in a congregation. But beyond the issue of language is a need for someone to assist those who will hear the story in the future. We can think of that person, perhaps an interviewer, as our interpreter working to be sure that the intent of the person speaking is made clear, perhaps by asking a question to clarify or by providing a transition from one part of a narrative to the next. This may sound somehow familiar.

The steps just described are the steps that one goes through to prepare for recording an interview for a newspaper, a television or radio program, or a church media project. Everyone has seen or heard those programs or read articles or books that are based on interviews. How truly wonderful it would be to see and hear Black Elk tell his story! Even if we could not understand his language without an interpreter, the expression on his face and the look in his eyes would help us "experience" his story.

We may not have a congregation filled with persons with stories quite as colorful as the life and visions of a Sioux holy man, but we will discover stories that will compete in intensity of experience, in good humor, in recollection of nearly forgotten details that can be just as compelling. These stories are the stories of ordinary people, our friends, neighbors, and fellow congregation members.

### **More Than Words Alone**

A few years ago, I was asked by my pastor to deliver one in a series of “Lenten Luncheon Lectures.” I had come to know him well and he was interested in my profession at that time. (I was CEO of a state public television network.) He wanted me to recount my faith journey and what had made me decide to pursue ministry. I prepared my “lecture” and was told that it would be recorded. It was not. Someone forgot to start the audio recording. I had a manuscript that I could copy for anyone who might want to have a record of what I said that day, but that was not enough. I still remember the keen disappointment of an associate pastor who wanted to be sure that what I said, and how I said it, was available. The point here, and it is not that my words were especially worthy of being reheard in perpetuity!

The point is that my manuscript could not capture *how* the words had sounded when delivered. I can recall being a little bit choked with emotion when recalling a challenging moment in my life. The manuscript alone could not recreate that sound in my voice. The great gift of technology is that it can capture simultaneously the “what” and the “how.” In fact, it may even be important to know where a particular message was originally delivered. Technology can accomplish that simultaneously as well.

In recent decades there has been much attention devoted to the field generally known as ecology. Our concern for the creation has found expression in the pulpit as faith communities strive to find ways to be good and faithful stewards of an ecosystem that is increasingly imperiled. The Bible begins with the creation story in Genesis and God pronounced it good. The virtues of taking care of our world, our national environment, and our neighborhoods are popular worship themes. How wonderful it would be to be able to recall how grand the world is because we see slides of beautiful scenes from the natural world projected on a screen or displayed on video monitors. A picture is indeed worth a thousand words and the act of visualization is a means of bringing the message home to a society that has learned the “grammar” of visual presentation. The where of the sermon message is enhanced by the use of commonplace technology; we see the “where” that is being described. We can add a lovely scenic picture to the front of the worship bulletin, but that symbol of the message of a given Sunday is but a token when compared to what is possible with only minimal extra preparation.

God calls us to proclaim the good news of the gospel. That call does not restrict us to the tools available at the time the gospels were set down. If that were the case our technological needs would be for good pens and readily available paper. The inventory of tools for setting down, preserving, and sharing our sense of God’s presence in the world still includes pens and paper. But the toolbox has grown and now contains truly marvelous means of reaching out. Our call to faithful discipleship and ministry suggests that we need to consider all of the ways of reaching out that technological progress provides.

## Dealing With Past Uses

It is true that public policy decisions and the growth of the broadcasting business, in the United States in particular, have resulted in excesses that run contrary to what we might desire. In recent years the perhaps already questionable image of religious broadcasting has been marred by scandals and outright fraud. It is the opinion of many that religious use of the mass media has promulgated questionable theology.

In 1964, the FCC<sup>8</sup> declared that no public interest was served by it discriminating between commercial and sustaining time.<sup>9</sup> That is, whether or not a station was broadcasting in the public interest would depend on the nature of its output and not the contractual basis on which the decision to air that output was made. If a radio or television station needed to fill some of its time with religious material in order to claim to be broadcasting in the public interest and sold time was as good for that purpose as freely given time, then it would sell time rather than give it free to the local council of churches. In 1959, 58 percent of religious programming was on commercial time; by 1977 the proportion had increased to 92 percent. Not all of this, but most, is the evangelical, fundamentalist, or Pentecostal material we think of as 'holy roller' or 'televangelist.'<sup>10</sup>

Steve Bruce notes that the impression made by nationally available religious broadcasting has been worsened by the demise of sustaining-time religious programming. "CBS in 1980 cancelled two long-running religious series because 'all but a dozen' of their affiliates preferred to use the time slots for paid, syndicated evangelical programs."<sup>11</sup> In 1988 CBS closed its religious unit and ended production of ~~For Our Times~~ the last sustaining-time program on any of the major television networks.

<sup>8</sup> The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is charged with the regulation of broadcasting and telecommunications in the United States. The Telecommunications Act of 1990 replaced the first major regulatory act passed by Congress as the Broadcasting Act of 1934.

<sup>9</sup> Sustaining is the term for broadcast time that is not paid for by commercial advertising.

<sup>10</sup> Steve Bruce, Pray TV: Televangelism in America (New York, Routledge, 1990), 30.

<sup>11</sup> Bruce, 31.

London:

I mention the plight of religious broadcast television to acknowledge that there is a spill over effect onto the use of technology in general. I do not believe that the existence of broadcast programming of questionable, indeed notorious, character should dissuade a neighborhood church from using technology. In fact, to surrender the field of technology for religious purposes to the excesses of much of what is broadcast nationally is to reject the call to the social justice of an opposing view. While local “production” cannot hope to compete with slick, well-financed syndicated religious programming, the local church can proclaim the good news for its community in ways that the national producers cannot hope to accomplish. What follows is an excursion into some ways to do just that.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Gathering the Stories**

Once the decision has been made to use technology to gather, preserve, and share the stories of the congregation the planning phase begins. The importance of careful planning can scarcely be overstated. Planning accomplishes several important goals including providing for participation by as many people in the congregation as possible, either directly or indirectly; prioritizing from a list of many possible projects; budgeting for needed equipment and necessary supplies; and assembling the human and logistics resources necessary. It sounds like a huge task, and if not done in advance of “production,” that is exactly what it will turn out to be. In other words planning need not be laborious and difficult as long as it is done first!

I discuss planning for the adoption of technology in detail in another chapter, and the model introduced there will serve well for most overall production or project planning as well. For now realize that the project work described in this chapter presumes that advance planning has already taken place. Let’s begin by considering the options available for gathering our stories.

Remember that the core concept is to build a record of the life of the congregation, a history of that church, comprised of the stories, activities, aspirations, and challenges of the membership. Rather than resort in future years to the dry as dust minutes of a meeting or some similar “official” record, our objective is to let the people who participated in the journey speak for themselves.

The Technology Task Force (TTF) has decided in their planning that what is really needed is a single videocassette record of each year in the life of the congregation.

They also decided for ease of production and in order to avoid major holiday periods, that the “year” will be the typical fiscal year from July 1 this year through June 30 of next year. That decision was prompted by the realization that trying to wrap up a major project in December was not a wise choice in a church community.

The project is built on the idea of a year in review for the church. Many of the team members have seen similar kinds of presentations as part of popular television programs, or because companies in town produce similar videos to celebrate a fiscal year. The technology team decides that success in building a year in review video project will depend on having gathered material all through the twelve months July 1 through June 30. Because of the July start, the team can use the slower paced summer months when there are fewer church activities to finish drafting the specific lists.

Event	Date(s)	Location	Media	Producers
Rally Sunday	September 17	Church	Video/Slides	J.S./H.W.
Adult Ed. Start	September 24	Church	Slides/Audio	J.G./J.S./B.C.
Sunday School	Sept. 24 (Oct. 1)	Church	Slides/Audio	J.G./T.W./H.W.
Thanksgiving	November 18	Church	Video/Slides	J.S./B.C./T.G.
Outreach		The Manor		
Advent	November 25	Church	Video/Slides	J.S./H.W.
Decorating				



### **Refining the Plan**

An examination of the (partial) chart of events will give the team quite a bit of useful information. First, notice that September is going to be a busy month, and November nearly as busy. It appears that October would be a good time to review the work of September and revise, if necessary the thinking about how to handle the events of November and beyond. Lulls or downtimes in a production schedule are an excellent opportunity to review and adjust based on experience and/or changed circumstances. Plans do, and should, change as necessary, but it is better for changes to be part of a conscious process than simply occur ad hoc.

Notice that there are two events scheduled to be covered on September 24. One of those events, the coverage of Sunday School startup, has a contingency date (it's in parenthesis) of October 1. It occurs to the group that they might avoid a possible conflict for use of the 35mm still camera and portable tape recorder if the intent to gather the Sunday School shots on September 24 was dropped in favor of the October 1 date. The group also notices that J.G. has been scheduled as lead producer (the first set of initials in the producers item designates the lead producer) on both events. That might be a problem as well. Finally, someone remembers that the start of Sunday School can be a bit of a chaotic affair anyway, so waiting for things to settle down a week might yield better shots and sounds than contributing to the chaos with a technology team crew snapping pictures and recording the sounds of getting organized the very first day of Sunday School.

As the TTF continues its review of the schedule someone observes that the Thanksgiving Outreach event might really be considered as two events. The first activity

is the preparation of Thanksgiving gift baskets by the junior and senior high school youth. That activity happens a few days before the scheduled delivery of the baskets to patients at The Manor Convalescent Center. A group in the church that calls themselves Married With Children delivers the baskets. It is a major family activity for those folks. The Technology Task Force decides that the event is really two events and ought to be treated that way in the schedule.

Here is the revised schedule that resulted from the planning review meeting:

Event	Date(s)	Location	Media	Producers
Rally Sunday	September 17	Church	Video/Slides	J.S./H.W.
Adult Ed. Start	September 24	Church	Slides/Audio	J.G./J.S./B.C.
Sunday School	October 1	Church	Slides/Audio	J.G./T.W./H.W.
Thanksgiving Basket Assembly	November 14	Church	Video/Slides	J.S./B.C./T.G.
Thanksgiving Basket Delivery	November 18	The Manor	Video/Slides	J.S./B.C./T.G.
Advent Decorating	November 25	Church	Video/Slides	J.S./H.W.

The central point to be made from this hypothetical technology team planning meeting is simply that careful planning is the activity of looking at a list of events to which people and technical resources have been added and making needed adjustments. The basic

activity calendar for the church has not changed. The schedule for the technology team is an adaptation of the church calendar to provide for the best use of resources.

### Planning the Shoot

Once the basic planning has been done, and a production schedule has been created, the TTF is ready to begin the planning for each individual "shoot."<sup>1</sup> Our discussion of basic techniques for producing/recording an event will be organized along the lines of individual "shoots." Once again there is planning to be done. This time the planning is handled by the individual production teams identified by their initials in the *Producers* column of the overall technology team production schedule. A bit of elaboration on the planning theme is useful at this point.

A Technology Task Force responsibility is to convert the church calendar into a production schedule for the year in review video project. That is, the TTF makes the decisions about what events will be included, and sometimes when a particular event will be produced. They also allocate the human and technical resources needed for each event shoot. This is a process that can be completed in a couple of evenings. The first evening is devoted to a first draft schedule filling in as much detail about what, when, how and by whom as possible. The second meeting is devoted to considering the first draft schedule, adding any missing elements, and making revisions like the ones described above. Of course, the TTF will continue to meet periodically to review the work already "in the can"<sup>2</sup> and to make other major adjustments that might become necessary.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The term "shoot" is borrowed from the television and film industries as the basic term used to describe the recording or filming of a particular segment of a production.

<sup>2</sup> Another industry term meaning recorded or filmed.

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## **Divisions of Labor**

Notice that the Technology Task Force did not do any specific planning for event production beyond an initial allocation of resources. In that regard the task force functions in a role identical to that of the executive producer of a motion picture or a television program. The team has made the basic decisions (governed by the church budget and board policy of course) about what will be done and the resources that may be allocated. But the task force has not done the planning for the specific event production, or shoot. That work is given to the producers for that event.

This division of labor is simple to describe but sometimes not so simple to do. While a discussion of management technique appropriate to media production is well beyond the present scope, it should be noted that an executive producer does not decide how many extension cords to pack with the light kit to take on location. Likewise, the TTF should leave it to the line producers, those persons responsible for shooting a particular event, to make the decisions necessary for the success of that shoot. To do otherwise is to micro manage the work of the producers and there are few management techniques that will more quickly remove all joy from participating in the activity.

The TTF, functioning as executive producer, does have the responsibility to review the work done and to set general policies for accomplishing the overall project task, including a policy that line producers plan a shoot before doing it. But beyond these general functions the TTF must do what management must always do in these kinds of situations: sit back, wait, and pray. I will discuss the review process in detail further on.

Once the responsibility for shooting an event has passed to the producers for that event the detail shoot planning begins. Notice that the responsibility is passed with the

creation of the overall schedule. That means that the responsibility for planning by event producers should begin as soon as the overall schedule is set. Someone who, ideally, has been through shooting assignments before, or who otherwise has experience in this kind of activity should head each team of event producers. It does not take a church long to discover the identities of the really capable videographers. The TTF should assign lead producers for an event based on the medium to be utilized. An event to be covered with 35mm camera does not need the capabilities of a videographer, but rather the skills of a competent still photographer.

Of course, the human dynamic will require that the TTF recruit interested persons as producers and gently guide those persons toward the specific events where their skills are best utilized. It is unusual, but not unheard of, for a person to wish to be a lead producer on a team of event producers using a medium or technology with which they have no skills or familiarity.

### **Pre-Production Planning**

The emphasis on planning now shifts to the production team. The overall schedule has designated production teams of two or three persons to accomplish the actual event shoot. The number of persons necessary for most non-broadcast video production is actually quite small, unless the event to be covered is very large or involves multiple locations. In fact, the fewer people the better. Remember that the idea behind the production is to capture the essence of a church event, not to become the event. Anyone who has been on location where a motion picture or television program is being shot will note that the sheer magnitude of the production crew, vehicles, and equipment can make the shoot an event in itself. On even the small scale of a church celebration the

presence of lights and camera, or still photographer, or audio recorder can have a noticeable impact on the nature of whatever is being shot.

Children will tend to “mug” for the camera or resort to playing shy. Normally easy to talk with adults may suddenly clam up; those who are very talkative may become more so. And the presence of a camera is simply hard to ignore. For these kinds of reasons the production intrusion on a church event should be minimized as much as possible. In addition to using only the technology necessary, producers should plan to arrive at an event well before it starts so as to minimize the disruption caused by the arrival of the “crew,” trying to find a place to plug in a light bar or an audio recorder, or the like. It is also extremely important that the leadership of the event being shot know essentially what to expect. All of this requires advance planning on the part of the production team – the “crew.”

If the event being covered is at the church then the logistics concerns are not nearly as demanding as would be true for a “remote”<sup>3</sup> location. In the interests of simplicity it may be best to have each production team use a standard checklist for planning a shoot. Even in-house events can pose some unusual problems or result in extraordinary preparation from time to time. It is just as easy to have all of the things to remember on one relatively simple sheet of paper.

Keeping paperwork to a minimum is most people’s strong preference. However, some paperwork is necessary for virtually any production and, when thought out a bit, can be designed to handle several different kinds of necessary chores all at the same time. Remember that planning and paperwork are necessary. Here is a checklist of the kind that will work for at-church or remote shoots.

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3 <sup>3</sup> Another industry term used to describe a production that takes place off site, away from studios.  
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### Production Checklist

Name of the Event			
Location			
Date(s)			
Scheduled Event Start Time			
Scheduled Event End Time			
Contact Person/Telephone Number			
Contact Person Notified?			
Production Crew Arrival Time			
35mm Still Camera - _____ rolls film	Out	In	By
Video Camera Kit - _____ tapes	Out	In	By
Light Kit	Out	In	By
Audio Recorder - _____ tapes	Out	In	By
Audio Mixer	Out	In	By
Microphones/Cables - _____	Out	In	By
Microphones Lavalier - _____	Out	In	By
Microphone Stands - _____	Out	In	By
	Out	In	By
	Out	In	By
	Out	In	By
Production Crew Head			

This sample list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but is representative of the kind of production checklist that will work very well for most churches. The list serves several purposes. First, it serves as a reminder of what needs to be taken along, whether it is just down the hall to a Sunday School classroom, or across town to a picnic grove in a city park. Second, the list is a reminder of the kinds of issues that may arise, particularly if the shoot is at a remote location. For example, if a shoot is at a local park and takes place on a summer evening, will there be a place to plug in lights when they are needed? The list also serves as the equipment inventory check out and return control. Finally, when completed and signed or initialed by the production crew head, the list becomes the report that the “raw footage”<sup>15</sup> is in the can.

Thus far we have discussed the review of the church activity calendar that yields an overall production plan for a church year in review videotape project. The production plan has been divided into the events that will comprise the shooting responsibilities for particular production teams, or crews, and those assignments have been made. Each crew is ready to begin the process of planning for their particular shoot(s). The technical equipment and supplies are in place. It's time to begin talking about production!

### **Production Planning**

This is the place that many ill-fated video projects begin. Planning is neglected in favor of making it up as one goes along. That simply does not work over the long haul and is particularly disastrous when more than one production team is at work on a project. What follows presumes the planning steps have been completed in some fashion.

Notice that in the overall production schedule for the video project that several combinations of media were identified as appropriate. Not all events were specified as

<sup>15</sup> Yet another industry term describing unedited filmed or recorded material.



requiring video production. Some events require still photography and audio recording to capture the sounds of the event. Some events require video and still photography. The guiding principles are economy and simplicity.

In order to discuss the several kinds of production a local church can successfully undertake it is necessary to start with a review of the overall project, the desired final product of the entire effort. The church wants a year in review video. Ideally, the video will capture the spirit of the activities of the church and the personalities of the people who make up the particular community of faith. Each church has its own unique personality; each video project in each year will likewise have its own personality. No two will be alike, nor should they be. The final product is a mixture of the people and the activities of the year. Some of the events will be preserved in a way that is not dissimilar to a slide presentation. That is, the event will be produced as a set of still images, hopefully with background sounds that flesh out the total impression of what took place. Perhaps there will be some narration or use of captions or other means of providing cues and transitions.

Other events will be produced with video and synchronous sound. In the case of a “personality profile” of a member of the congregation celebrating, for example, a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, the videography may be accomplished with just a single video camera. In the case of the taping of a major musical event, or a speaker and other contiguous activities, the use of multiple video cameras may be required. In all cases the governing principle should be simplicity first. The technology employed should be adequate for the occasion and nothing more. Technological overkill is both a real temptation and a real problem. For every additional technology employed in any given phase of production the work to

be done after the raw production footage has been produced must be reckoned with. There is danger in underestimating what is really required to complete a project.

Once the decision is made to commit to multiple video camera recording, the decision to spend significant hours in editing the final product has also been made. In the years that I spent in executive management at public television stations I had to monitor myself to restrain my zeal for multiple cameras, locations, etc. in the cold harsh light of reckoning with the time and expense in distilling the entire raw product into something really useful, and really on budget. In the world of television and motion picture production, nothing is free. The same principle, albeit on a much smaller scale, is true for churches that aspire to the use of technology.

We begin with the simplest form of production using pictures and sound. Truly wonderful media projects have been nothing more than still images, usually in the form of 35mm slides, combined with music and or “wild track”<sup>5</sup> sound. Sometimes the effect of this simple combination of picture and sound yields a product that is truly greater than the sum of the component parts. An example of this kind of skillful blending of media I had the good fortune to hear many years ago when one of my radio documentary students ended a program on the difficult subject of childhood learning disabilities by mixing the program closing credits with one last opportunity to present his message. The voice of the announcer doing the production credits was interspersed with music from the rock opera “Tommy.” As I listened to the first few seconds of the credits segment, I was a bit puzzled and then I made the connection. In one example that produced tears in the eyes

<sup>5</sup> The industry term for sound that is non-synchronous with the picture. For example, still photographs of waterfalls might be combined with a recording of rushing water that was made at an entirely different location. Such a use of sound would be termed non-synchronous setting audio. Music used with similar still pictures would be called a music track. Music and non-sync sound are often combined producing marvelous pictures in sound.

of several who heard the broadcast, the audience was treated to the name of a production participant and then the lyric track “Tommy can you hear me?” Similar interspersing of the lyrics from “Tommy” ran through the entire credits segment. The impact was powerful, imaginative, appropriate, and memorable. I can hear it in my mind 30 years after the broadcast.

The point is that it does not take elaborate technology to achieve a major impact and truly memorable production. It does take ingenuity, some experience, a willingness to experiment, and imaginative use of the simplest of technological tools. Here is an example of the use of just still photography and wild track sound to capture a visit to a Sunday School class full of happy and exuberant youngsters.

Imagine the images of the children, their faces specifically, flashing on screen at intervals of 2 to 3 seconds accompanied by the sound of them singing a song they’ve learned or reciting in unison a poem or a psalm from their lesson of the day the production was shot. Compare that image in your mind with a still picture of the Sunday School class assembled for the typical “class photo.” Imagine the sound accompanying the latter image is a narrator intoning the fact that Miss Jones’ primary grades class had a busy year with 12 children participating. Contrast in your mind the image and sounds of the close-up, individual, perhaps candid photos, perhaps interspersed with group photos as well, accompanied by classroom sounds, with the classroom group photo and the voice of a narrator. The former technique is clearly more vibrant, interesting, and enjoyable. And it is no harder to produce than the latter more mundane (read that boring) approach.

Now that we have a general description of the Sunday School shoot as accomplished with still photography and audio recording, we can unpack that simple

production to see how it came to be produced in such a way. Let's begin with the decision to use still photography. It may well have been a budgetary or time issue in the minds of the technology team that designed the overall production and allocated the basic resources. But much can be done with little. Still photographs are relatively easy to shoot, make use of a technology that will not provide more than minimal distraction for the children in the class, use inexpensive materials, and provide for some redundancy for contingency purposes. A reasonable quality 35mm camera with an adjustable focal length (commonly called "zoom") lens and slide film are all that is required.

Using the adjustable lens allows the producer/photographer to shoot from well away from the subjects and from the out of the way vantage point obtain some really charming close-up "portraits" of the youngsters in the class as they go about their activities. Of course, it would be possible to have each youngster pose for his or her picture, but the results are not nearly as fun or as meaningful for our purpose as the candid portrait approach. Remember that we may be producing for the video screen where we need to provide as much interest as possible, even when using non-motion photography. If the subjects appear animated, then the final production will take on the feel of motion and aliveness. Otherwise the feel to the finished product may be more akin to perusing a typical church photo directory.

In addition to the pictures of each youngster, carefully checked off against the class roster to avoid leaving anyone out, the producer will want to secure shots that bespeak the setting in which the class takes place. Groups of youngsters, artwork, handicrafts – especially in the making, classroom materials, the instructor(s), the view out a window, the door to the room open so the viewer can see inside from a vantage point in

the corridor outside, and other possibilities will use up the roll or rolls of film and provide what will become a short video essay that truly describes that classroom event.

### **Into the “Field”**

While the still photography is going on another producer/crew member is recording the sounds of the room. A word of caution is in order here. Cameras have viewfinders that allow the photographer to have a very good idea of what will show up on the developed film. The audio equivalent of a viewfinder is a headset plugged in to the line monitor of the audio recorder. While there are many inexpensive audio recorders on the market that will do a fine job in a controlled circumstance, the production scenario we are describing is not a controlled circumstance. That is, the producer cannot “mic” the subjects, nor can the exact placement of a microphone relative to the action of the room be guaranteed. I suggest that the best quality audio recorder that can be reasonably afforded be purchased for production work. (See the appendices for some tips on buying an audio tape recorder.)

Experimentation in the setting in which production will take place is called for, as is the ability to point a microphone in a particular direction or make adjustments to the input volume to avoid the effect of rushing water caused by the presence of an air conditioning or heating vent nearby. These requirements of good audio production require (1) some practice time and (2) the ability to make adjustments on the fly during the actual production.

Once the tape recording is done and the slide film is shot, the producer(s) should carefully label the exposed film and recorded tape, with the event, location, date and their initials. Have a supply of labels – computer address labels or file folder labels work well

– on hand with the camera and the audio tape recorder. Each producer should promptly turn in the tapes or film to a designated point so that the elements – the “raw footage” is not misplaced, left to broil in the glove compartment of the car, or, in the case of the audiotape accidentally used for another purpose. Never leave unused film in the camera. Use up the roll and remove it for labeling and submission to the collection point for the project. Similarly, do not leave a partially used audiotape in/on the recorder. Each shoot should have its own supplies that are not shared with any other shoot. Trying to economize and use a roll of film or an audiotape for more than one event is guaranteed to produce nightmares at the point the assembly of the video project begins. The frustration of searching an audiotape, or endless sorting of slides, is ultimately much more expensive than the cost of adequate supplies.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Remembering the Journeys**

The church is called to be a community of the faithful, gathered together to proclaim the good news of the gospel and to uphold each other in the faith. Scripture reveals the importance Paul attached to the early church coming to understand its self and its ministry to the community. Our responsibility for self-awareness as the church is the same today. Part of understanding our selves is to know the journeys of faith undertaken and lived by our membership. This chapter is about one way to respond to the call to understand our selves and remember the journeys.

In the modern church much importance is attached to the notion of fellowship, time to get to know one another outside of the traditional worship setting. Churches provide coffee hours, young adult social groups, youth activities, and the like in part to foster a sense of community. We also build an awareness of our collective identity when we remember that each church is made up of the people and that it is the journey of each individual congregation member that contributes to the tapestry that is the life of the church together. I am reminded of the way that I was taught as a child to intertwine the fingers of my hands together, index finger tips together and representing a “steeple.” Then I saw that those clasped hands were the church and said “here is it’s steeple, come inside and see all the people” and my hands were turned over to reveal the rest of the fingers – the people. That is the way it should always be, the church is the body of Christ and contains the people.

It has been difficult up until relatively recently to conveniently preserve for posterity the faith journeys of individual persons. Preservation did occasionally happen

in the form of journals, diaries, or perhaps a series of letters over an extended period of time. But those records are beset with the same problems that are true of traditional written church records discussed in the previous chapter. They are words only, perhaps with the occasional photograph, and they are missing the vitality of expression that we feel when we are privileged to hear someone recount an experience or their personal journey of faith.

It is certainly possible to preserve the stories of individual members using a still camera and a tape recorder, the technique discussed in the previous chapter. But there is a far better way. The use of videotape recording technology is now financially well within reach for even very small congregations. I suggest using single camera video production as a means of remembering our journeys. What will be preserved for the benefit of the church will be the journey recounted by the person who made the journey, not just in their own words, but with us hearing those words the *way* they were said and with the facial expression, smiles, tears perhaps, and all the other elements of communication, both verbal and non-verbal, that make face to face contact so very satisfying for people.

Single camera video production is the simplest video technique and requires only minimum equipment and expertise. That is not to say that it can be successfully undertaken without careful planning and care in production. You are probably familiar with the amateur cinematography or videography of a family member or friend. At the risk of being uncharitable, most of those kinds of recordings of family vacations, birthday celebrations, anniversaries and the like are rather difficult viewing in all but the smallest doses. The reason that these kinds of “productions” are hard to watch is that they have



been produced on the fly without benefit of time to plan, or a lesson or two in the use of the technology. For example, I recall in the years when I taught beginning television production that one of my first tasks was usually to get the students to forget the cameras were equipped with zoom lenses. Had I not done that, most student projects would result in viewer disorders akin to seasickness caused by the apparent motion of both subject and camera! That kind of double dose of motion doesn't work well, and, of course, it is very common. Careful planning and some practice will eliminate those kinds of problems.

Planning is necessary for any kind of successful video production. There are no exceptions. There is enough that can go wrong in even the simplest planned production to provide plenty of challenge. Failure to plan makes the challenge of achieving acceptable production quality impossible. That is why even the simplest video "shoot" requires going through a planning checklist before the camera is even taken out of the storage closet. I want to emphasize one basic premise that should govern video production planning. Particularly at the outset, each project will require at least *double* the time you think it will. In other words, video production cannot be rushed if the results are to be worth the effort expended. It is far better to approach each project prepared to be careful and methodical, than to skip a step and find out that what is "in the can" is unusable. So, step one in planning is to make a realistic estimate of the time required.

As a very general rule of thumb I would suggest at least a two-hour block of time is needed for each one-half hour of finished recorded material. That is two hours minimum; I have seen shoots that were thought to be extremely simple take incredible numbers of hours. In those days I had to monitor the costs of those hours, but even in a

church production without paid staff, it will be difficult to sustain enthusiasm for projects that perpetually “run over.” If in doubt, plan on a little extra time.

### **The Video Interview**

Before I delve into a brief look at the actual production techniques, we need to consider what kind of a project will best help us remember a journey. There are many techniques that could be employed, but for reasons of simplicity, consistency, and manageability I suggest the video interview. It is a production technique that is very familiar due to the omni-present news interview on broadcast television and to the long time popularity of interview format news/entertainment programs like NBC’s “The Today Show” or any of the several news/public affairs programs like “Meet the Press.” Most adults are already familiar with the basics of an interview just because they have seen so many of them.

The interview has several advantages in terms of simplicity. First, it does not require any kind of elaborate setting or any kind of specialized equipment. Second, it is easy to plan in terms of desired content. Third, a member of the congregation who has some verbal ability and is willing to learn a basic set of skills can be the interviewer. Finally, the interview is familiar at the outset.

Consistency is important because there will likely be a good sized number of interviews recorded over a few years time and they ought to have a “look and feel” that is similar one to another. There are reasons beyond aesthetics, including being able to make use of material from several different interviews for some other video production purpose. Consistent style makes finding the desired footage (specific part of an interview) in each of several different interviews a simple task. In addition, it is

important to treat members of the congregation with some degree of similarity. The interview format accommodates all of these consistency needs.

Interview projects are manageable because they do not require extraordinary technical or human resources. Full-scale video production is a very labor-intensive business, which is why it is so expensive, particularly at broadcast quality production levels. The video interview escapes the majority of those costs in generally not requiring a production set,<sup>✓</sup> or a large crew, or expensive post-production. It is certainly possible to make an interview into a very elaborate project, but there is no need to do that. There is a trite but true saying that I like to keep in mind when planning television productions, and computer programs, that applies here. It is the time-honored KISS principle, or Keep It Simple Silly! Projects manageable by local churches should be simple projects. Remember Jesus used nothing more than lines in the dust to make his points. Our wonderful tools should not lure us to attempting projects that we cannot successfully manage.

Let's assume that the church Technology Task Force has decided to embark on a one-year trial period of producing video interviews. The agreed upon theme for the "series" of videos is "Remembering Our Journeys." *The intent is to capture in each interview the personal story of one member of our congregation.* Before we proceed I want to unpack that last sentence. First, each interview is designed to capture one journey and only one journey. Second, each interview has one interviewee – one subject person. Third, the emphasis of the interview is on the story of that person. I do not recommend that more than one person conduct an interview, nor do I recommend that more than one person be interviewed. Yes, that does mean that I do not recommend that

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<sup>✓</sup> In the case of a multi-camera studio interview a modest set would probably be used.

a married couple be interviewed together. There are two reasons for this recommendation: each faith journey is unique and it is very difficult, nearly impossible, to give equal attention to more than one interviewee. Even experienced, professional interviewers do their best work when they concentrate on one person. Jesus often had to work with a crowd of persons; but it is clear that Jesus' attention was often directed to one person drawn from that crowd. The fascination of the one-on-one attention has made the marvels of Jesus' ministry readable and inspirational for centuries. The interview projects should similarly honor one person at a time.

Once an interview schedule is devised in whatever way the church leadership feels is appropriate, the next task is to secure the willingness of the prospective interviewee. Most churches will find that willingness to participate increases with familiarity with the concept. Generally, it is not too difficult to find a gregarious, older member of the congregation who loves to visit. Those persons are excellent prospects for a fledgling remembering our journeys project. There will also be those persons who may feel flattered at being asked, but decline to participate, and of course their preferences should be honored without any kind of undue pressure to reconsider. Sometimes those who pass an opportunity to participate change their minds on their own and participate willingly later on. It will not take long to build a list of interviewees sufficient to fill a one year production schedule.

As the list of interviewees is made up, attention can be devoted to the content of each interview. Remember that the goal is to record a personal faith journey in the words of the person who undertakes that journey; the "what" of the project is paramount. Every interview should start with a list of carefully prepared standard questions, and a lot of

them. It has been my experience that students often made the mistake of preparing five questions or so for a fifteen minute interview exercise only to discover that they exhausted the store of questions in something less than three minutes and had to “wing it” for the remaining eighty percent of the interview. That is not a good situation and is virtually guaranteed to yield an interview that no one will be able to view without soon squirming in embarrassment for the two persons on camera. I recommend as a rule of thumb to plan on one question per running program minute; a fifteen-minute interview would then require fifteen questions.

Thus, the interview content planning begins with the questions. The set of questions prepared in advance is called the standard questions list. One reason for having a good number of standard questions is that some of them are bound to elicit very brief answers. It is useful here to note that for every general observation that I make, there are wonderful even startling exceptions. I have conducted interviews of half-hour length that required only two questions. I have also been the interviewer in situations where I could not possibly have prepared enough questions to fill the time. Exceptions happen, but the general recommendations I am offering are a good place to start.

What do the people who will view the interview want to know about the person being interviewed? Start by trying to put yourself in the place of different members of your congregation, including a good mix of both age and gender. What would that group want to know about the people they worship with on Sunday? Pretend that you have the privilege of sitting and visiting in the interviewee’s living room over a cup of coffee or glass of lemonade and that you are trying to learn what makes this person a unique child of the Creator. What was their life like in the early years? Who is or was important to

them? What joys have they encountered on their life and faith journey? What sorrows? What are their warmest memories? What is there in their living room that suggests a hobby or interest, a special talent or gift? These are the kinds of broad questions that can be asked within the context of an individual church that will yield the standard questions.

Note that absent from the broad categories suggested above are the “nuts and bolts” kinds of questions that should not be part of an interview of the kind we are discussing. Questions such as where the person was born, or (never do this!) their age, or how far they got in school, or their favorite something are pointless as well as artless. Some of this kind of very basic information may be important, but there is a better way of sharing it as will be discussed when I consider the production techniques of the interview.

It is important that the interviewee have an opportunity to participate in crafting the interview-specific questions. Interview-specific questions are those that are developed during pre-interview conversation, ideally with the interviewer, but sometimes with a producer or associate responsible for planning the specific interview shoot. The standard question list discussed above is the jumping off point for adding any additional questions that the person being interviewed might suggest. In addition to providing an opportunity for questions beyond the standard questions, the pre-shoot visit allows the interviewee to obtain a copy of the standard questions. Giving the interviewee a copy of the standard questions in advance accomplishes two purposes.

First, the person being interviewed will have a chance to think about their answers. It might be useful to point out that they are not expected to fully prepare specific answers to each question and certainly should not go so far as to write out answers or even make notes for use during the interview. In fact, that kind of advance

preparation on the part of the person being interviewed is actually counter-productive. However, some time to consider the questions and ponder what one might say is very useful. Second, there may be a question or two among the standard questions that the interviewee finds troublesome for some reason. In such a case they may wish to eliminate that question from the interview altogether. In fact, the interviewee and the interviewer/producer should go over the standard questions and note any that the interviewee prefers to have omitted. I recommend that the interviewer/producer initial and date the list of standard questions - combined with interview specific questions - after they have been reviewed. That safety precaution will indicate that the reviewed list is the official list for the interview and that no other list should be used.

### **Successful Interviewing**

The interviewer obviously has a major role in the success of the project. It is not a role that should be undertaken by someone who is not willing or able to spend the necessary time. While it is not uncommon in broadcast television for the interviewer to have only a brief time just prior to broadcast or taping to review questions often written by someone else, that is not a recommended practice. The interviewer will ideally function as the producer and be instrumental in drafting questions and working with the interviewee at every stage in the process. It will take some time and effort, but the experience is incredibly rewarding because the result is getting to know a child of God.

“Talent” is the industry standard term for those who appear on camera. Unfortunately the term and the existence of the actual commodity it names are sometimes not synonymous. Put more bluntly, some talent doesn’t have much. It is also true that most people can discover a new talent or skill by practicing and being mindful of some

tricks of the trade. Interviewing is a very learnable skill and does not require large amounts of natural talent or special ability. Thinking over a period of several years of teaching radio and television production, I cannot recall more than one or two students who absolutely could not conduct a successful interview. A person who meets people easily and enjoys conversation can be a terrific interviewer. Nevertheless, choosing an interviewer should be done carefully. If the interviewer is not comfortable in that role, it is certain that the interviewee will not be comfortable at all, and equally certain that the discomfort level will be readily apparent in the finished product.

There are some specific skills associated with effective interviewing. Generally the skills fall into three areas: off-camera production skills, questioning skills, and non-verbal re-enforcement skills.

Off-camera skills include the ability to work quickly and confidently in the period before the videotape rolls to record. That is why the pre-interview visit at the location – ideally the home of the interviewee – is important. Time spent in trying to find a convenient plug to connect the power strip to run lights and other equipment is not useful the day of the interview and will add an element of stress that is counter-productive for the communication and conversation that is to follow. Similarly, the interviewer should have worked with his or her subject guest to choose appropriate clothing and perhaps jewelry for the occasion, rather than suggest a search through the closet when the crew arrives to shoot. On the day of the actual interview recording the interviewer and interviewee should sit in the chairs to be used for the shoot and spend some time getting reacquainted. The production crew should take care of the rest of the logistics.



It is altogether too common an occurrence in non-professional production to have the interviewer trying to function as a crew member and, for example, set up lights while trying to talk with the interviewee, or worse yet simply letting the interviewee wonder what is going on. The interviewer's job is the interviewee. Period.

Asking questions seems like a very simple thing to do. After all, it is something we probably do everyday. It is something Jesus seems to have done often. In the case of the recorded interview, there is more to asking questions than might be immediately apparent. Consider this question: "Tell me how you came to be a member of our church and what it felt like to be part of the group that led the effort to build the new sanctuary?" The problem is that this is not a question; it is two questions connected with "and." The first rule of good interviewing is to ask one question at a time. Let's unpack that double-barreled question a bit and discover why, beyond being two actual questions, it does not work well for an interview.

First, the questions are presumably about two different points in time, the point at which the subject person became a member of the church, and the period of planning for a new sanctuary. Even if the sanctuary planning kickoff was the day the person joined the church, the sanctuary planning was not accomplished by the end of that worship service. The time periods, the scope of the events to be recalled, are dramatically different. Asking a person to do that kind of recall will very often confuse the issues in their mind. Moreover, the answer may turn out to be sufficiently ambiguous that the interviewer will have to ask clarifying questions to sort it out. Sorting it out takes time and may result in other more important topics being left out.

Second, the two parts of the double question are not logically related. There is simply no reason to combine them. An interview should have a flow based on a pre-determined pattern. That flow will be interrupted by combining questions that are, for example, chronologically out of sequence. Consider this simple sequence. Asking how a person came to be a church member is a good and logical opening question: "Harold, when did you become a member of our church?" That question might be followed by a question like, "Can you tell us what the church building looked like then?" And that question could be followed by, "What you described is very different than the sanctuary is today. I understand that you were one of the persons who led the effort to build the new sanctuary. Tell me how you became involved in that project." Notice that the last question is actually three statements.

An interview that is simply a string of apparently unrelated questions is a poor interview. In the example above there is an order to the questions. The questions start with the earliest church-related recollection, which is followed by a question about the same general period of time and then moves forward in time to the effort to build the sanctuary. I mentioned that interviews have a pattern, a plan that determines the order of the questions. It is actually more accurate to say that there is a general overall plan for the interview and that each general element may have its own order and structure.

For example, the above sequence of three questions is clearly chronological. That whole sequence may be the element of the overall set of questions related to the role of the interviewee regarding the new sanctuary. The sequence of questions would probably arise out of both the standard questions and the interview-specific questions, organized to work together as a unit. Here are the questions again:

### Question

### From

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| 1. "Harold, when did you become a member of our church?"   | Standard List  |
| 2. "Can you tell us what the church building looked like then?"  | Interview List |
| 3. "What you described is very different than the sanctuary is today. I understand that you were one of the persons who led the effort to build the new sanctuary. Tell me how you became involved in that project." | Interview List |

Notice that the questions have a logical flow.

An interview that consists of the interviewer only asking questions and not doing any other interacting with his or her guest is a poor interview. It is perfectly fine to ask two, or maybe three, questions in a sequence without other comment, but usually not more than that. An exception to this general rule might be in a case where it was important to retrieve from someone a sequence of simple facts in a particular order. Such exchanges are brief. Question three above breaks the pattern of using an actual interrogatory in favor of three statements. The last statement of those three is the actual "question." The other two statements that make up question three are there to serve other purposes.

The statement "What you described is very different than the sanctuary is today" is a recap statement. It is not planned in advance; most often it could not be. It is a technique that a careful interviewer uses to do two things. First the recapitulation of the answer to the previous question tells the interviewee that he or she was heard. Why is that important? The importance lies in the feeling of the interviewee for the flow of the interview. An audience can "feel" a disconnection between the interviewer and the interviewee if the interviewer does not react to, or acknowledge fairly frequently, the answers to the questions. The interviewee will feel that disconnection as well and if it

lasts for a while it can become very disconcerting. It is even possible for the interviewee to begin to feel annoyed at the lack of feedback concerning the answers he or she has provided. A second important function of the recapitulation statement serves as a mini-summary that helps the key factor(s) of the answer to be heard.

Returning to the three statements of “question 3” above we find this as the second statement, “I understand that you were one of the persons who led the effort to build the new sanctuary.” This is clearly not a summary statement because it presumably was not mentioned in the answer to the previous question. Instead it is information that the interviewer had already obtained and used to provide a transition into the actual question. Transition statements are used for two general purposes. One use is to provide a shift into another line of questioning altogether as in, “Let me shift to another topic ...” ✓ Another use is in letting the audience know that the person is qualified to answer the question that follows. Clearly someone who “led the effort” to build a new building is qualified to talk about their involvement in that construction project.

If you have gotten the impression that planning and conducting a good interview consists of more than just scribbling some notes on the back of an envelope before sitting down to tape the event, then you are aware of what is involved in preparing for the verbal portion of an interview. It is now time to shift to the non-verbal parts of an interview. Non-verbal? But aren't interviews made up of words, questions and answers, conversation? They are indeed, but they are made up of other important components as well. Non-verbal elements consist of interviewer non-verbal technique and props and pictures. We will consider the interviewer's non-verbal contributions first. It is important to define non-verbal because I am using it in a slightly different way than the

standard definition of an utterance without words, such as a sigh, or a gesture or facial expression. I include all of those elements but admit the use of some actual words in a “non-verbal” utterance as well.

Once in a while I have encountered a beginning interviewer who appeared to not be having much fun. The expression on that persons face said clearly that they were uncomfortable, bored, or disinterested. Facing an interviewer who sends those kinds of non-verbal cues is not a pleasant experience. The best interviewers are overtly involved in the situation. In fact some television interviewers such as Charles McLaughlin of “McLaughlin Group” fame are extremely expressive non-verbally (as well as verbally). Mr. McLaughlin can be a really intimidating presence except that he is “interviewing” a group of very seasoned journalists who can hold their own quite well.

In interviewing members of the congregation the interviewer really only needs to be her/his self. In casual conversation people are inclined to say something like, “Oh no, really?” when surprised. That is a natural expression and is usually accompanied by a look of delight, surprise, or even dismay with vocal inflection and energy to match. It is a natural element of human conversation and we do it without thinking about it. Reactions are important in an interview as well because they do several useful things, but the reactions of the interviewer do need to be a bit more calculated.

The careful interviewer will substitute for a reaction like, “Oh no, really?” something like, “Now that is fascinating. You must have been really ...” Just as was true for verbal reaction and feedback the use of non-verbal feedback tends to add the elements of engagement and interest on the part of the interviewer, but should refrain from challenging the content of the answer which, taken literally, “Oh no, really?” could be

construed to do. It is really a matter of semantics, but remember that the interview is not a completely natural conversation due to the additional mental processing on the part of the interviewer and the interviewee. That additional processing tends to add special sharpness to what would otherwise simply be a colloquialism.

It is also possible to overdo non-verbal reaction by overly prolonged laughter, or perpetually nodding the head in agreement. Sometimes just a pleasant smile and a quick nod of the head will supply all of the re-enforcement an interviewee needs or wants. At other times a stronger more vocal reaction, perhaps with a verbal acknowledgement is appropriate. The idea is to make the interview as comfortable and natural as possible for the person fielding the questions, and for the audience who will view the finished project.

The other non-verbal elements in an interview are the presence of props or pictures. The use of either or both of these elements will provide some technical complications in an interview, but are not always ill advised. The use of pictures, particularly photographs, or an actual object being discussed can be very useful. However, one caution is necessary at the outset. Do not allow the use of props or pictures unless each and every use has been carefully planned in advance. With planning they add much to a video interview, otherwise they are an invitation to disaster and a serious distraction.

Pictures are indeed worth a thousand words. However, that maxim is true only if we can clearly see the picture. Otherwise, a picture is the reason for lost words as the audience mentally disengages from the interview and concentrates on trying to see the picture. One of the "ten commandments of television" as promulgated by Professor

Edward Stasheff<sup>16</sup> is this: "Thou shalt remember that the close-up is the all important shot." If the photograph being held by the interviewer is of a group of people, it is not a close-up. That means that the ability to pick out details of faces and the like is virtually impossible and will immediately be a source of frustration for an audience.

The solution for pictures in an interview is to "shoot" the picture separately and include that specially shot tape or still photograph in post-production. The use of these additional pictures and tape footage will be included in the discussion of video production techniques. For the present I want to offer some general observations with regard to pictures or photographs in an interview. If the video is not to be widely distributed or broadcast then there is really no problem with regard to copyright when using a commercially produced photograph or picture in a church video. Copyright is an issue when using the work of someone else in a video production if broadcast is contemplated, or the video will be widely distributed as a tape cassette. The applicable copyright provisions are beyond the present scope, but suffice it to say that photographs, pictures, artwork and the like produced by someone other than the interviewee could in some circumstances pose a copyright obligation for the church and competent assistance should be obtained before including such elements in a production. Of course if the picture or photo is the work of the interviewee then the issue is moot.

Objects, commonly referred to as props, are sometimes a bit less troublesome than pictures, unless they are very small, or move in some way. In the event that a prop is too large or otherwise too difficult to visualize during the interview (which is very likely in the single-camera interview) the solution is to shoot the object separately for inclusion in

<sup>16</sup> Edward Stasheff and Rudy Bratz, The Television Program: Its Direction and Production (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), 174. <sup>3rd ed.</sup>

the project in post-production. But remember that post-production requires both time and equipment that may not be available in your church.

The discussion of the role of the interviewer has presumed that the interviewer is present in the “set” with the interviewee. Remember, however, that our frame of reference is the *single* camera interview. That is, we are relying on one video camera to record the event. Since using the zoom lens and panning to capture the close-up image of whoever is speaking is not a good idea, it is very likely that we will not be able to see the interviewer's face even when a question is being asked. For most purposes this is acceptable. We want to concentrate on the person who is being featured anyway. Of course it would be desirable to see the interviewer ask the questions, or when he or she reacts to an answer, but that is not generally practical using only one camera. One camera production is relatively simple and inexpensive, but does involve giving up some visual elements.

### **The Interviewee**

The most important element of an interview about a faith and life journey is of course the person who is making that journey. I turn attention now to the interviewee. I have already mentioned that the interviewee's role is not strictly passive. Hopefully that person has been involved in establishing questions beyond the standard questions list and has helped in the scouting of the location, probably their home. They ought to feel like a part of the team effort, not just the subject of a video project. However, being interviewed unquestionably puts the focus squarely on that person. Being the center of concentrated attention can be a bit unsettling unless one is properly prepared for the experience.



Everyone involved in a video project should understand that featured “talent” are in fact not professional television personalities and therefore subject to making normal mistakes and that nervousness that will naturally accompany this kind of event. In fact, those being interviewed can take some comfort in the fact that even the most capable and seasoned professionals are subject to genuine stage fright from time to time. The late comedian Red Skelton was often physically ill before performances only to have the sensation pass the instant he was “on.” Nerves are a fact of life and should be expected. Persons who perform regularly in such activities as community theatre usually report that some nervousness is actually beneficial and helps to keep them poised and alert.

Feeling a bit nervous may lead to the interviewee wondering what to do if they make a mistake. The answer is to acknowledge and correct it if it’s really necessary, and move on. In the process of answering a question there is nothing at all wrong with saying, “You know, I didn’t say that very clearly, let me try that again...” and then doing so. Such behavior is completely normal and natural and will actually contribute to the overall feel that the interview is in fact a conversation between people who know and like each other. I suggest a brief rehearsal period during the few moments that the lights and camera are being set up. That will allow an emotional and intellectual warm up so that when the tape rolls to record the experience will be at least somewhat familiar.

It is usually desirable to play back a minute or two of “practice” interview to put the whole crew at ease – and to insure that the equipment is working as it should. Notice that I suggest a minute or two, no more. Rehearsing an entire interview will have the effect of eliminating the spontaneity that makes interviews interesting to watch and

interesting to do as a participant. So, do a quick question or two, play them back using a monitor brought along for that purpose, and then go for it “for real.”

### **Last Minute Checks**

There are several other reasons for doing a quick two-question rehearsal. A playback of the tape of the rehearsal will often reveal the need for some changes in the environment. The crew should check for possible problems during setup, but being sure that the potted plant in the corner does not appear to be growing out of the top of someone's head, due to optical distortion by the lens, is worth catching before one has 30 minutes of footage with that unintended feature. Among the other things to check is the appearance of the person featured. Is there a lock of hair out of place that may prove to be unduly distracting? What about the lovely gold necklace that looked terrific until the production lights were turned on and now appears to be twinkling and flashing as if it were battery powered? Or perhaps the producer notices that the excitement of the moment is causing the interviewee to fiddle with a watchband or ring. Even if the actual object being toyed with cannot be seen, the audience will soon wonder what the person is playing with and resort to trying to figure it out. The presence of something like a charm bracelet, or rhinestone earrings, should immediately alert the crew to the potential for problems.

In addition to visual problems that need to be spotted, there may be audio problems in the interview environment. Be very suspicious of any setting in which there is a fan or nearby air conditioning unit. Microphones, even the kind of lapel style microphones that are most useful for an interview, are subject to the effect of moving air. Some microphones, notably “condenser” types, are designed to amplify the sound

automatically. These sensitive microphones will increase their “gain” or sensitivity during a few seconds of silence. If there is any ambient noise in the room, such as the hum of an air conditioner, the noise will appear to get noticeably louder in the seconds when no one is speaking. If at all possible, turn off the air conditioner if it is located in the room where the interview is to be recorded. It is also a very good idea to unplug the telephone!

### **Roll to Record**

Once the distractions have been spotted and eliminated, the production is ready to get under way. The assumption in single-camera video production is that the event is “live to tape.” That means that the tape will roll just before the interview starts and will be stopped when the interview is over. What happens in between *is* the event as it will be seen. Of course there is always the chance of a complete disaster that will require stopping the production and even starting over. However, this is an absolute last resort circumstance and should be avoided unless there is no other option. I have seen interviews continue after glasses of water were spilled in laps, and after set pieces fell over off camera. These and similar disasters really turned out to be no problem when the tape was reviewed. In short, barring someone fainting on camera or a similar circumstance, don’t stop the tape!

The potential for distractions during an interview means, of course, that everyone tries to spot possible problems before recording starts. Another problem that can be eliminated is the distraction caused during the interview recording by the production crew. Under no circumstances should members of a production crew be within the visual range of the interviewee unless necessary. That means that the person checking the audio

quality and watching the event on the monitor should be located out of the sight of the interviewee. Speaking of video monitors, there is absolutely no reason to have a video monitor in a place where it is viewable by either of the on-camera people. The dancing eyeballs effect caused by someone trying to focus on the person sitting opposite them and see themselves in the monitor is actually quite funny – unless of course it makes an appearance in the final product.

It is equally important that the crew not attempt to communicate among themselves, including by gesturing. Inexperienced persons on camera will at the very least indicate that they have noticed the distraction by facial expression or “looking out of frame.” Sometimes a distraction by a crew person is enough to stop an answer in mid-sentence. Minimal necessary communication can be accomplished using simple “sign language” without noticeable distraction.

As mentioned earlier, producing with a single camera places constraints on the production style. The obvious major constraint is that the only thing the audience will see is that which is in the shot at any given instant, and nothing more, unless provisions are made for editing the interview after it is recorded. Editing is useful from both an aesthetic and a logistics point of view, but it is expensive in terms of equipment and the time it takes to do even simple editing. The emphasis thus far has been “live to tape” without the need for editing. However, the presence of photos or props sometimes means that either one lives with a visual element that cannot be clearly seen, or one edits the tape to insert a close-up of that object at the appropriate point in the interview. That is an aesthetic consideration, prompted by the desire for every shot to be as perfect from an

audience perspective as possible. There are also logistics considerations. Editing may be used to correct a focus problem or to cover a poorly framed shot.

### **Editing**

Editing requires one or both of the following extra production techniques. One way to handle the “it’s too small to show up on the monitor” problem is to take along a still camera with a good close-up lens and shoot a still picture (pictures preferably) of the prop, picture or art object. That slide can be digitized and inserted into the interview using readily available (but not inexpensive) editing equipment. Similarly, after the interview has been shot the producer can shoot close-ups of those things that were mentioned or made an appearance on camera using the video camera and another videotape. That separate videotape is called the B-roll because it is often inserted in deck B in an editing system to be merged with the main tape on deck A yielding the edited master on deck C. This is why editing is a bit pricey. It requires either multiple tape decks and a video switcher, or the presence of a digital non-linear editing system that can store images or sequences of video and reassemble them as desired. Prices on non-linear editing systems have dropped substantially in recent years, but even if the equipment is affordable, it takes some practice, combined with good visual aesthetic sense, to use it effectively. It is typical for editing to require much more time than was required to shoot the original footage, often as much as double or triple.

Having hinted about the uses of editing I want to return to the premise that editing is not going to be an option and concentrate for the remainder of this chapter on single-camera techniques that are workable alternatives to time in the editing room. To do that it is necessary to review the basic “shots” used in video production. A shot is named for

the field of view it represents. Therefore, a shot of a person standing in a room where we see the entire person and some of the surrounding room is called a “long-shot” abbreviated as LS. If that person were in the middle of a field and we see a fair amount of the field around the subject we would be looking at an extreme long shot (ELS). A shot of a person viewed from the waist up would be the general field of view called the medium-shot (MS). In an interview these shots are not particularly useful.

Remember that in video production the close-up is the most important shot. The reason is simply that the audience wants to see as much of the face of the person speaking as possible. Therefore the most common shots in the single-camera interview are the close-up (CU) and the extreme close-up (ECU). The close-up reveals the face of the subject, generally framed so that there is a bit more space in the direction that the subject is looking. That convention is observed so that the nose of the subject does not appear to be in danger of hitting the edge of the frame and the space between the subject nose and the edge of the frame is called “look space.” You can visualize this for yourself by holding your hands in front of your face, side by side with the tips of the thumbs touching each other. Your upright fingers form the left and right edges of the visual frame. If you close one eye, frame the face of someone sitting nearby in the space above your thumbs, and move your hands left or right you will get a rough idea of framing and look space.

This brief excursion into shot types and visual composition is only meant to provide a brief glimpse of the art. Actually you can learn a great deal by putting the video camera on a tripod, seating a willing friend or patient spouse on a chair, and practicing framing just their face for the most pleasing composition. After a while, particularly if you play back a videotape of the experiment, you will see that some

“shots” were visually pleasing and some were not. This is possible because you have really learned much of the aesthetics of videography without knowing it. You have learned because you have been watching television and going to movies where these techniques are used over and over thousands upon thousands of times. What practice will do is allow you to take what you have seen so often and translate that into what you see in the viewfinder of your video camera.

One other thing you will discover if you tape your experiments with a video camera is worth mentioning, and that is that overly using the zoom lens will almost certainly spoil what you are attempting to do. When you realize that the zoom lens is to be used only to go from a medium shot to a close-up (or perhaps from a close-up to an extreme close-up) and is done very slowly if done while the tape is rolling, you will have made a giant step in separating yourself from folks who only use a video camera to record a family gathering where no one minds if the zoom is erratic and the focus fuzzy. In single camera production it is frankly necessary to use the zoom lens. There is no other way to get from a shot that establishes where the interview is taking place, which is really necessary, and that all-important close-up. And in a longer interview it may be good to re-establish the setting about mid way through the project. The idea is to use the zoom lens while recording only when it is really necessary and that does not mean just to add variety to the “shots.” Experiment and you may be surprised by how quickly you will learn what you need to know to effectively serve as the camera person on an interview production crew.

An excellent way to learn the basics of video production is to have a look at a basic textbook on studio television production. An even better way is to take a video

production course at a local community college. And still another way to learn is to enlist the aid of someone who has these skills and is willing to contribute to your church some time to share their gifts and expertise. People willing to do that are out there, perhaps at a local cable company or television station, and most really enjoy being asked to tutor one person, or a small group of people, who want to offer their church community the gift of remembering our journeys.



## Chapter 4

### Sharing the Tradition

It is likely that one of the first thoughts to cross the minds of the congregation when the notion of technology utilization is introduced is the recording of the traditional Sunday morning service. In churches that have two types of services there may be discussion about which most easily lends itself to video recording. But no matter the decision about what will be recorded, the church is responding to God's call to reach out into the world, or at least into the surrounding community. After some familiarity with other kinds of video projects, which have become part of the church history, the congregation may feel called to this next step and plan to extend the worship experience beyond the walls of the sanctuary. If there has been success at projects like the interview project described in Chapter 3, then it may very well be time to work toward taking the message of God's love outside the church.

A decision on the part of a church Technology Task Force to videotape and make available the worship service each week is a major decision. Proceeding with this undertaking should only be done after it has been carefully planned and when there is expectation that this new outreach ministry can be sustained over the long term. Compared to a project of interviews planned and recorded over a year, potentially the worship taping commitment is for a 52-week season, although some churches that do this kind of project suspend taping in the summer months. In any event the effort will require resources, including depth in human resources. A basketball team cannot hope to play a game with only the five starting players. Jesus knew he could not rely on just one

disciple. Similarly, a church cannot execute a yearlong worship recording schedule with just one video crew. Human resources are often the most overlooked resource in planning for worship recording. The zeal to share the tradition sometimes causes real “who is going to do this” issues to be glossed over.

Certainly some video recording of worship supports the theological objective of the church speaking to itself. That happens because the use of video enables any member of the congregation to view a worship service that was missed. That is pragmatically useful. We know that God speaks to us again and again in new and refreshing ways when we revisit scripture. The same principle of discovery or rediscovery is true when videotaped worship services are made available.

A second theological purpose – the church speaking to the world - is served when the videotapes are made available outside the church for those who are considering membership, those who are confined to care facilities, or those away from home for extended periods of time such as persons in military service. It is outreach ministry at its best because much of the actual experience can be shared even though the impact of worshipping in community at the actual time of the service is lost.

There is really no substitute for the experience of time-honored liturgy experienced by being present in the midst of a faith community. Videotape can record the sights and sounds, and even add some enhancements to the experience not available in the sanctuary, but it is still a substitute. Videotape availability will usually make the person viewing it wish that they had been in the sanctuary at the time the service was held. Any fears about people deciding that viewing the videotape is a good enough worship experience, and that church attendance is therefore unnecessary, would do well

to remember that the same sort of dire predictions were made regarding the future of the movie theatre with the advent of the home videocassette player. Familiarity with the traditions of a church in worship gained through a video recording will increase interest in worship attendance.

Once the decision to proceed with recording worship has been made, the first topic to be considered is what changes will be needed in the conduct of the worship service. In terms of the liturgy no changes are needed. In fact, the only real change in worship that might be observed by those attending on a Sunday morning is a kind of “crispness” to the pacing of the service. For example, it might have been customary for the pastor to move to the pulpit after an anthem sung by the choir was completely finished. In a service that is being recorded the pastor will move to the pulpit in order to be there when the anthem is finished. This kind of elimination of the “dead spots” in the service is usually noticeable, and usually an improvement.

Less obvious small adjustments might be made such as using some standard lengths for such things as calls to worship, or the invocation. Pastoral prayers might also tend to become similar in length over time. These kinds of adjustments are minor, have no material impact on the experience of those present in the sanctuary, and enable smooth and more error free video production.

An especially attractive aspect of the videotape version of a service is found in things that can be added to enhance the worship experience. Anyone who has ever been lector in church just a few times has learned that the Bible contains some really interesting names. Sometimes they are not the kind of names that fall “trippingly from the tongue.” Videotaping the worship serviced tends to do wonders for ensuring that

some sort of decision about how to pronounce an unfamiliar name is made and that the pronunciation is practiced until the reader can do it reliably. It is even possible for names or terms that appear in the sermon to also appear on screen, so that there is a visual reinforcement to help viewers with the unusual word. That is generally not the case in the sanctuary.

### **Video ~~From~~ the Sanctuary**

Until recently, sanctuaries were not designed with video production in mind. Today there is expert architectural advice available that will insure that a new sanctuary is ready for the addition of audio and video production capability at any time. Fortunately, modern audio and video equipment can be installed in most sanctuaries with little alteration of the space. The two biggest obstacles are a means of running the required cables from the cameras to a control point, usually a control room, running the required audio cables from microphone placements or a sound mixer to the same control room, and providing sufficient lighting.

The video cameras of today are a far cry from the cameras of an earlier era. In the 1950s and 1960s a television camera weighed many pounds and it usually took a couple of people to lift it and place on its pedestal or tripod. Cameras were also temperamental beasts that consumed light from very hot instruments (the source of the term "hot lights") in immense quantities, and needed constant monitoring and adjustment to maintain picture quality. Modern home and industrial grade cameras are relatively forgiving of less than optimal lighting and do not require nearly as much of it as used to be the case. Modern cameras are easy to set up and require little if any adjustment during use.

A sanctuary worship service can be effectively covered with a three-camera array. Each camera has a primary function, that is it is focused primarily, though not exclusively, on one area of the sanctuary. The three cameras can be located any place where a permanent pedestal can be installed, or where a camera tripod can be set up. Ideal places include balconies at the foot of an aisle (to minimize blocking the view of those sitting behind the camera positions) or on the main sanctuary floor off to one side on a small platform approximately two feet above the main sanctuary floor. If there is a balcony, then two cameras can be installed there, leaving the third camera on the sanctuary main floor. A church will have no difficulty obtaining expert local advice with regard to camera placement. A request for help from the engineering department of a local television station will probably yield some volunteer assistance in planning a technical installation. Of course, there may be someone, or even several, in the congregation with some television production experience. Another source of help is the speech and communication department of a local college or university. In some areas denominational offices may have staff trained in media production that can help with planning. At this writing plans are being made for a national center and training site for helping clergy and laypersons learn to use technology at a local church.

In addition to video cameras, the local church will need to plan to acquire an audio mixer of sufficient size to handle several microphones and capable of feeding a control room with mixed sound. There are many sources of help with that project as well, including world wide web sites dedicated to church audio-visual support and the engineering staff at a local radio station or recording company. It may be that an audio mixer already installed at the church will be ample for providing the videotape audio.

Someone with just reasonable familiarity with audio systems can tell by making a quick examination of the back of the microphone mixer.

The other major items of expense, and which require careful planning, are the additional lighting necessary for video production and an intercom system to permit the control room to speak with camera operators. In some small churches it may even be possible to use the cameras in lock-down mode, which does not require a dedicated camera operator for each camera. In that event a crew intercom system is not necessary. The amount of lighting equipment needed will depend on the size of the sanctuary, but it is generally a fairly simple installation and often can be done so that the lighting instruments are very inconspicuous. Intercom and lighting advice and assistance can be found at the sources already mentioned and, in the case of lighting, at a local college or community theatre. In smaller churches lighting can be of the “set it and forget it” variety. Simple lighting does not require the presence of someone to operate the lights. In the case of a large sanctuary, or worship “production” that includes lighting special effects, a lighting crew person with intercom access will be necessary. An example of a lighting effect is the dimming of the lights on the choir when the sermon begins. Sometimes the sanctuary lights are dimmed slightly during the sermon as well. Note the use of the word “slightly.” A sanctuary with lighting that is too dim may invite the occasional nodding off, hopefully sermon content will alleviate that problem!

Churches have been remarkably creative in determining where to put the control room for the “sanctuary studio.” It is not necessary that the control room be immediately adjacent to the sanctuary. Control rooms have been located in basements underneath the sanctuary, in converted “crying” rooms originally designed to sequester cranky infants,

unused classroom or office space, and even in large closets. All that is required is that there to be a way to route the wires and cables for intercom, sound and video from the sanctuary to the control room. Care should be taken during planning to conform to local building codes with regard to low-voltage wiring requirements. In the case of lighting installation the services of a competent electrician will be required.

There are portable control facilities available that are designed to be wheeled out of storage when needed and "plugged in." These self-contained units include a video switcher for determining which camera is in actual use at any given moment, and small monitors so the director can see what each camera "sees." Other necessary equipment would include the intercom equipment, the video recorder(s), special effects devices such as a character generator for displaying text on the screen with the picture, and potentially much more. While this portable control option does eliminate tying up a space in the church, it should be the choice only if a control room space cannot be found. There is a certain amount of necessary conversation that takes place between a director in a control room and the rest of the production crew. In almost all cases the crew can respond in ways that do not involve them speaking and causing a distraction. But the control room is a place where there will frequently be a need for conversation during the taping of worship. That fact argues for a dedicated space, out of the way of people participating in worship, and where the necessary conversation will not be a problem. Portable control facilities do not work well for that purpose because too often they are either in the sanctuary or at some other public place and therefore quickly become a nuisance.

The kind of equipment generally described above will require an investment of several thousands of dollars and a budget of several hundreds of dollars annually for

maintenance and supplies. Beyond the capital outlay, this kind of production will require a dedicated crew of between 5 and 10 persons to adequately produce a live-to-tape recording of a worship service each week. That means that a church will need a production crew roster of between 15 and 30 trained and willing persons to staff the undertaking. Production set up time will require approximately 45 minutes before worship begins and about 15 minutes afterward to shut down and secure equipment and lights. The results can be truly a wonderful way of responding to God's call to reach out to the world outside, but it is a time consuming and, depending on the budget size, potentially an expensive undertaking.

### **The Sanctuary Crew**

Most churches assume that volunteers will do the video production. There is nothing basically wrong with that assumption. Public television in the United States has for many years made excellent use of volunteers for local production, most often fundraising events. One of the lessons that can be learned from the experience of public television is that the cultivation and training of production volunteers is an on-going task. For example, it is common for camera operators to be young adults who eventually go away to college or otherwise become unavailable. A volunteer crew composed of retired persons must also be constantly refreshed as older persons curtail activities that often require physical endurance. The job of being sure that a crew is trained and ready each Sunday is a substantial responsibility and not something that can be delegated to the youth director, although he or she can be of immense help, or added to the responsibilities of the church secretary. The church secretary can be very helpful in preparing a rotating crew roster, and even in phoning with a reminder of a crew



assignment on Thursday or Friday. However, television production – and that is what multi-camera coverage of a worship service really is – requires specific skills. The leadership, particularly the person fulfilling the role of director of this level of production, will need to be well qualified.

It is important that “well qualified” not be defined as someone who is really, really interested in production and has read up on the subject. Production of a product the church will be proud of, particularly a live-to-tape production where significant editing is not done, will be among the most frustrating activities imaginable unless the leadership understands what they are doing. That is a blunt statement, but it is absolutely true. Fortunately the skills are not difficult to learn, but will require some time. Experience has shown that a person who completes two basic undergraduate courses in studio based television production will have the requisite set of skills necessary to lead a church video production unit and to serve as the production director on Sunday mornings.

Since a back up person is necessary in such a key role, at least two interested persons must be identified who have the skills or the willingness to acquire them. Once that has been accomplished, and about a year of production has been done, it will be possible to begin to train directors internally. Participation as a camera operator will provide very real on the job training for a future director. The same may be said for the crew position of assistant director. The jobs of the several crew positions are described in another chapter, but suffice it to say at this point that a trained crew, with qualified leadership functioning as the production director, is absolutely necessary.

### A Summarized Sanctuary Production

Thus far I have described the resources needed to consider live-to-tape production of a Sunday morning worship service originating in the church sanctuary. I turn now to an overview of how a typical Sunday morning service is planned and “shot.” The best way to illustrate production planning is to use a “shooting script” derived from a typical order of worship. Here is what a small portion of a very simple “worship service” might look like on paper as a director’s shooting script. The shorthand notations are used in conjunction with what the director sees and hears on the control room monitors. The shooting script is a production plan.

VIDEO	AUDIO
cam 2 ELS Sanctuary	VO: Good morning and welcome to worship...
key “Your Church”	VO: Preaching this morning is the Reverend...
key “Pastor...”	
cam 1 MLS Jones/lectern	Lay leader greeting
cam 3 LS choir	Choir anthem
cam 1 MLS Pastor	“Good morning! This is the day...”
cam 3 MS Pastor	“The text for this morning is from...”
key “Mark 12:38-40”	
cam 1 break cong. CUs	“...Jesus warned against pride...”

This abbreviated fragment from a hypothetical shooting script shows the relationship between the audio and video in a worship service production. The first line in the video column describes the first image the viewer will see, in this case an extreme long shot of the entire sanctuary. While that image is on screen, the audio column shows that there is voice over (V.O.) narration, either live or prerecorded, welcoming the viewers to the church and naming the pastor. In the video column there are also two references to “keys” in the opening moment. A key is the production term for displaying text as part of the picture, in this example the name of the church and the name of the pastor. The director would call for the display of the keys at the instant the church and subsequently the pastor were mentioned in the audio.

The shots and the cameras utilized are indicated in the video column, along with a very short description of the field of view and subject for each shot. Similarly the audio column provides a description of what is to be heard, the person speaking, and a key phrase used to prompt the display of a particular visual element such as a key. Note that at the time a scriptural text is used, there is a prompt in the shooting script audio column for the use of the key displaying the specific text.

Obviously multi-camera production at this level calls for training and experience. However, some large churches are routinely engaging in this kind of production and the end product is used on nationally distributed cable services.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Assembling a Project**

The emphasis of the previous chapters has been on media projects that are produced without requiring editing or other post-production activity. In this chapter I discuss the concept of editing. In order to achieve production levels beyond the most basic, editing is often necessary. It is a matter of deciding how much effort to devote to polishing a production. Editing does require special equipment and substantial time and effort. But it may be very worthwhile. If you have visited a museum and seen the incredible beauty of hand lettered and illustrated copies of the Bible, you have seen a commitment to the time needed to glorify sharing the word with God's people. Editing can indeed be worthwhile.

Readers who are not familiar with the basic hardware of audio/video production may wish to read through the glossary before delving into this chapter. While the intent is to provide only a basic overview of editing so that a church might begin to think about whether or not editing capability is warranted, some technical terms, notably relating to equipment, are part of the following discussion. Checking on the meaning of a term can be done using the glossary as well.

#### **Elements of Editing**

Editing is simply the process of assembling a finished production, for our purposes on videotape, from several sources. In other words, editing permits enhancement of the "what you see is what you get" live-to-tape production discussed earlier. Editing can utilize several different kinds of media in achieving the desired final

product, a finished videotape project. The primary footage of a given production is the videotape containing all, or nearly all, of the event start to finish. In a single camera project such as the one described in chapter 3 that would not utilize editing, there is only one roll of videotape. In editing that tape is called the "A-roll." The name comes from the fact that in a traditional editing system the videotape machine containing the main videotape is usually designated machine A.

A second common source of material for an edited production is material on the "B-roll." The B-roll tape contains additional footage, generally shot at the same time the main A-roll footage was shot, but utilizing a second camera and, therefore, not just a duplicate of the content of the A-roll. For example, the B-roll tape might consist of nothing but close-ups of the person or persons we see on the A-roll.

The simplest editing scenario would involve inserting a section of the B-roll tape over the picture on the A-roll tape. Here is an example. Suppose in a one-camera interview project the producer notices that at one point the interviewee notices something out of frame and looks off momentarily in that direction. Anyone seeing the tape will note the glance and wonder what the person might have been looking at. These kinds of visual distractions are very common in production of any kind. B-roll footage can be used to "cover" the glance away by inserting the face of the interviewer, perhaps smiling or nodding in agreement at what the interviewee is saying, replacing the interviewee during the time the interviewee was looking out of frame. The audio does not change; the voice we hear is still that of the interviewee, but instead of seeing the interviewee's eyes look suddenly away, the audience sees the face of the interviewer "reacting" to what is being said.

Television interview and talk programs, including news broadcasts, make frequent use of B-roll to mask something on the video of the A-roll tape. It is standard practice for a news cameraperson to shoot some B-roll shots, perhaps close-ups of the reporter, or of the person being interviewed, or of the setting where the interview takes place just before or after the actual interview is recorded. If needed, those B-roll shots can be edited in to the finished report to cover any distractions that show up on the A-roll.

In addition to the use of B-roll to mask a visual problem, B-roll shots can be used to handle other common production problems. In the discussion of single camera production in Chapter 3 the problem with being able to adequately see objects or pictures was mentioned. B-roll footage can be used to provide the viewer of the finished project with a much better look at something being referred to in an interview. The technique simply involves being sure that the B-roll includes closeup footage of the object or photograph. For example, suppose that a guest displays a photo of something during the interview. Obviously the field of view that includes the guest will not provide an adequate view of the photograph. However, immediately after the interview the producer can get several seconds of B-roll of the photograph where it is the only object in the frame.

During the editing process the producer electronically inserts the footage of the closeup of the photograph at a point where the person speaking is talking about the photograph. The need for the viewer to be able to see what is being talked about is thereby accommodated. This is important because persons viewing a videotape will be very frustrated at not being able to see something because it is too small an object in the picture. The B-roll closeup changes the view from a photograph being held by someone

to a full screen view of just the photograph. There are many similar kinds of uses for B-roll shots in a production utilizing editing.

Some kinds of editing systems are able to use still photographs directly without the need to first transfer the still image to videotape. This is particularly true in modern digital editing systems that can make use of digitized still pictures. Even relatively simple editing systems include the capability to use computer generated graphics or text during the editing process. One device for doing that is called a character generator and is the commonly used means of including such elements as the name and perhaps title of the person we see on screen in text, generally located in the bottom one-fourth of the picture.

There are many possibilities for additions to the main stream of video and audio on the A-roll tape. That abundance prompts a note of caution at this point. Enhancements in a production due to editing are rather like seasonings in cooking. The right amount adds zest and character; too much makes the dish unpalatable. There is a temptation in the early stages of having editing capability to over use the capability. The result is a video project that is so full of dropped in visuals that it resembles the sort of video montage associated with promotional clips for motion pictures, the sort of thing one sees when attending the movies right before the feature film starts. While the use of many visuals is in itself a special effect that is useful in short doses, it is annoying after about a minute and becomes a visual bombardment of the viewer. In extreme cases a video project could be impossible to watch due to the too rapid change of picture.

It is good to remember that much can be accomplished with very little. Jesus never wrote a word as far as we can tell, but we can see in the stories he told the elegance of simplicity. We are called to share our ministries faithfully but not “fancily.”

### **Audio and Music**

Thus far the discussion has been about editing the video portion of a project. It is also possible to edit the audio portion alone, and to edit both simultaneously. The most common use of audio editing is actually not to remove an element, but to add an audio enhancement such as music, or to enhance the audio generally through a technique called equalization. It is possible to delete undesired sounds in the audio portion of a video recording during editing. However, the end result is usually a fairly obvious alteration and editing to delete something should be done only if absolutely necessary. It is far better to attempt to make the environment where the recording is being done as free of distracting sounds as possible. That is don't forget to unplug the telephone located in the same room.

The addition of music during the opening of a production is a nice touch as is music over the end credits naming those who participated in the project. Here again the effect is pleasant, but time consuming. One way to add music to a video production with minimal bother is to decide on a music theme for all of the productions in the project. Music for use as theme music may come from many sources, including recordings especially developed for that purpose and commercially available. An excellent source is the church choir or the organist. Ideally a theme is music that is planned so that it lasts just exactly one minute, or perhaps a couple of seconds less than a minute.



The precise timing of theme music allows for ease of use. For example it is very easy when editing to note exactly when there is one minute of time left in the project. When it is time to add the music theme the playback of the theme can be started precisely at that pre-determined point. That will result in the video and audio portions of the project ending together and on a finished note. One very common technique is to plan on the closing credits of a project, generally text, or perhaps text over some other picture, to last some definite length of time. The procedure is more complicated in those situations where a project is to be used as a broadcast program in which case timing of the entire program must be right to the second, but in essence the same techniques apply for using theme music at the beginning and end of the production.

As mentioned above, it is always best to remove potential audio problems than it is to correct them in post-production editing. However, sometimes it is desirable to do some cleanup of an entire audio portion of a project. For example, if a producer listens to a project and notes that there is a kind of “booming” effect every time someone speaks, it may be possible to eliminate the booming sound without harming any other part of the audio. A common, and relatively inexpensive, means of doing that is through the use of audio equalization. Many modern audio recorders, and some cameras that contain audio recording capability, have some built-in capability to improve audio quality. One popular system is the Dolby <sup>TM</sup> noise reduction system that was developed to help remove the noise associated with the friction of audiotape passing over the recording head and the general residual noise associated with audiotape. However, sometimes some additional audio enhancement is needed.

An equalizer is a device that allows an editor to increase or decrease sounds in particular frequency ranges. Returning to the example of a “booming” sound during the time someone is speaking in a project, it may well be that the objectionable sound is due to the acoustics of the room where the recording was made. Some rooms simply have a kind of audible boom, even an echo, produced by the sound of a voice bouncing off of hard surfaces in the space. Modern architecture takes these kinds of problems into account, but it is still possible to have the problem show up in recorded material even if it is not noticeable otherwise. By selecting certain frequencies to be reduced in intensity it is possible to remove the objectionable sound from an audio recording. It is a matter of trial and error, adjusting the equalizer until the desired audio quality is achieved, or at least as good a quality as possible is realized.

It is important that the audio portion of a videotaped project not be overlooked. Too often an otherwise excellent production effort is marred by lack of attention to quality sound. Inexperienced producers have a tendency to concentrate so much attention to the video portion of the project that the audio gets short changed. Experience has shown that having someone on a production crew charged with specific responsibility for just the audio portion is a very good investment of human resources. In addition, mixing of sounds from multiple microphones or other sources requires constant monitoring that is best not left to those responsible for the visual elements of the production.

The foregoing is but the briefest of introductions to the kind of enhancements that are possible if a church decides that production plans warrant more than live-to-tape recording. It is literally true that only resources limit the potential for polished professional quality edited productions. Modern digital equipment has made it possible

to manipulate sound and pictures in ways that are truly astonishing. However, that capability comes at a hefty price and, while some limited editing might be useful, an ambitious use of editing and the effects possible in post-production should generally be avoided. Particularly in sharing the good news of faith with the world outside, churches that decide to employ technology to produce on videotape aspects of their ministry would do well to remember that Jesus used no such tools for messages that have lasted some two thousand years.

The first broadcast of the now classic program Rowan and Martin's Laugh In was produced by editing videotape through actual cutting and splicing the tape. That kind of rigorous and time-consuming effort is no longer necessary. Although editing technique is beyond the present scope, suffice it to say that modern editing systems can manage multiple tape machines and other devices to electronically put together images from several sources resulting in one edited master tape. Digital editing systems make use of computer technology to store images and manage the sequence of visual elements.

### **Production and Editing Terms**

There are many technical terms used to describe parts of the editing process, but for most church-related video editing, there are five basic editing transitions that need to be mentioned. Some of these terms may be familiar; certainly anyone who has seen a motion picture or a television drama has seen the following techniques used many times. Video projects of any sort are put together using cuts, dissolves, cut-ins, cut-aways, and fade ins/outs.

Even the simplest editing system has the capability of doing a simple assembly edit called a *cut*. The cut is simply the joining of two different video sources. The

viewer sees, for example, someone holding an object in his or her hand and in the next instant a closeup of the object. That is a “cut” because the transition between the shots is instantaneous as if the tape had actually been cut and spliced. The closeup shot of the object is called a *cut-in* because it gives us a different view of something that was already seen in the preceding shot. In other words, in the first shot we see someone holding an object followed by a “cut-in” to a close view of that object. A cut is the transition that is used between shots when there is no discontinuity in time, place or subject. The only thing that changes is the field of view.

Another special form of the cut transition is the *cut-away*. The cutaway is used to give us a view of something that has not appeared in the previous shot. For example, if we see a closeup of someone who from the expression on his or her face seems to be looking for something, and in the next instant see a shot of a parked car, we conclude that the person was looking for the car. We have cut-away from the action of the person looking to provide a view of the object of the search.

A *dissolve* gets its name from the visual impression created when one image disappears while simultaneously another image appears. The dissolve is used to indicate a discontinuity in time or location or subject matter. For example we might dissolve from a shot of an airplane taking off to a shot of the interior of the airplane a moment later. Audiences have learned over time that a slow dissolve tends to mean that there has been a significant change in location or time, while a rapid dissolve is only a minor change in location or time.

Most video productions start with a *fade-in* from black and end with a *fade-out* to black. Even inexpensive home video cameras often have the capability of making the

picture fade in and out. The fade to black followed quickly by a fade-in has also come to mean a very large discontinuity in time or location, or a change in subject matter altogether. As is true of all videography and editing techniques, a little experimentation will clarify the concept.

Up to this point this chapter has focused on defining the edited video project and identifying some of the most common elements that are used in video production. I shift attention now to what can be called the *grammar of teleproduction*. The subject is introduced here to provide background for churches considering video production. The remaining topics in this chapter also provide a basis for understanding the basic elements of video production from a simple one camera video project to a multi-camera project that will be edited after the basic recording is done.

### **Video Terminology**

In television production there is a common means of describing the visual elements of any video production, a production “jargon,” that is widely used. Once understood, these basic terms enable everyone on a production team to understand what is to be achieved at any given moment. The terms are the basic language of video production.

In video, the point of reference is the *frame*, the picture on screen at any given instant. Each frame in a video project can be thought of as a separate still picture. Put another way, if a videotape of a project is stopped, the resultant picture should be aesthetically correct and should be describable using the terms that will be introduced.

What we see on screen is described as a kind of *shot*. The shot includes everything visible to the lens of the camera, generally that which will be seen ultimately

by a viewer. Actually what is visible in the viewfinder of the camera may be a bit larger area than is visible when the tape is replayed and displayed on a regular monitor or television receiver. Different cameras have different characteristics with regard to what proportion of what is visible in the camera viewfinder is actually recorded on tape. Some experimentation will soon reveal the *ellipses of essential information*, which may be thought of as a smaller picture centered inside the picture visible in the viewfinder. The importance of the ellipses of essential information will become obvious further on.

Here are the various kinds of shots – and their names – as one might see them from a camera position at the rear of a typical sanctuary. The first shot is the *widest* shot; widest means that the field of view is as much as can be encompassed by the camera and lens in use. A shot with the widest field of view is called by several different, generally synonymous, names: wide shot, long shot, or establishing shot. The name describes the fact that what is seen in the shot includes a wide area, perhaps the entire front of the sanctuary. The objects appear to be a relatively long way from the camera, and the shot “establishes” that we are in a church. The pastor standing in the pulpit in the long shot might be identifiable as a person in the pulpit, but perhaps not which person due to the distance from the camera. The fact that the pulpit is visible along with such objects as the alter, a lectern, perhaps choir seating and similar elements that define the sanctuary would also be visible in this shot, thus clearly establishing the location for the viewer. The long shot is often the first shot in what is called a *traditional shot sequence*. The standard abbreviation for the long shot is LS.

As the names and description imply, the long shot is used to establish the location and define the relationship between the various physical elements in the sanctuary. Since

it establishes the scope of the setting it is usually, but not always, the first shot in a sequence of shots that effectively moves the viewer closer and closer to the person or object of most importance. If the pastor standing in the pulpit is about to begin the sermon, then the most important object in the long shot is the pastor.

Since one of the most basic rules of video production is that the closeup is the all important shot, viewers are not going to remain happy viewing the pastor in long shot, particularly after the pastor begins to speak. In fact, if the viewers cannot soon see the face of the pastor, frustration will set in and the viewing experience will become manifestly unpleasant. For that reason, a director would move from the long shot to the next shot in the sequence as soon as it was felt that the location had been established in the viewer's mind.

In our sanctuary location – again with the camera located at the rear of the sanctuary – the next shot in the traditional shot sequence is usually a *medium shot*. The medium shot, abbreviated MS, is the most ambiguous of any of the traditional fields of view. The reason for the ambiguity is that ‘medium’ is a relative term that depends on the field of view of the preceding long shot. For example, if the long shot is of a single person standing several feet away and we see the whole person in the shot, head to toe, then a medium shot would be a view of that person from the waist up. In the sanctuary example, a medium shot might be of the pulpit and the pastor, a medium shot relative to the view of the whole sanctuary that preceded it.

A medium shot is generally more satisfactory from the standpoint of the viewer because we are able to see more of the “action,” in the case of the sermon the person who is speaking. However it is still not the most satisfactory shot because the details of facial

expression are still not likely to be visible. What is needed, and again relatively soon, is the third shot in the traditional shot sequence, the *closeup*. If the closeup is so important, why not move to it right after the initial long shot? The reason is that the impact of moving from a long shot directly to a closeup is often rather jarring. Imagine seeing the whole front of the sanctuary and then, instantly, seeing the face of the pastor filling the screen. This is often the unsettling kind of “shot sequence” that one sees in amateur videos. The average home video is not obliged to follow any kind of shot sequence, so moving from the table with guests and birthday cake to a closeup of just the cake is not a problem. Of course more than a few minutes of home video has been known to be an unsettling experience due to very rapid and unexpected changes in the field of view. In fact, intentionally violating the long shot, medium shot, closeup sequence is a common technique in action or horror films, where the intent is to surprise, even shock the viewer. Shocking experiences in viewing a sanctuary worship service due to unusual sequencing of shots would certainly not be a good idea.

The last shot in the traditional sequence, then, is the closeup, abbreviated CU. When the shot is of a person, the closeup is of the persons face, generally the whole face. There is a version of the closeup called the extreme closeup (ECU) but its usefulness in church-related production is very minimal. The ECU is a highly dramatic shot and it is often used in films or television programs to heighten the impact during an emotionally charged moment.

It is the closeup that the viewer wants to see. Therefore, a wise director or videographer will move relatively quickly from an establishing shot, to a medium shot, to a closeup. In the case of the single camera production this must be accomplished by



using the adjustable focal length, “zoom” as it is usually called, lens. The change in field of view from establishing shot to closeup with one camera is one of the very few reasons to use the zoom lens “on line,” that is during recording where the viewer can see the field of view gradually change. Note the use of the word “gradually.” Too rapid a change in field of view using a zoom lens is another of the hallmarks of the amateur. If the zoom lens is to be used at all, the movement needs to be both very smooth and very gradual.

It is useful to mention one other commonly made “zoom” mistake. To successfully use a zoom lens on line requires being sure that the picture will stay in focus from wide shot to closeup. In order to do that the camera should be focused off line by zooming to as *tight*, that is as closeup, a shot as possible and then focusing. The lens may then be zoomed out to the wider shot and when zoomed in on line the shot will remain in focus. The common mistake is to focus with the zoom lens on a shot that is not as narrow a field of horizontal view – that is close up – as possible. A lens focused on less than the tightest shot possible will likely lose focus during a zoomed shot. Experience has shown that when zoomed tight on a person if their hair is in focus the rest of the range of the lens will be in focus as well. A carefully focused lens, checked off line, prior to use, will ensure that the pastor is not fuzzy in closeup! (Need it be said that a sharp video image does not necessarily guarantee a focused sermon?)

Thus far in describing shots commonly used in video production we have named the shots by their relative field of view with respect to the subject. There are other terms the director can use to describe a shot to a camera operator. Among these terms are the shots that are named for the number of primary objects in the shot. Generally, we think of people as the primary emphasis in a shot of a worship service. A shot of a single

person is called a *single*. A shot of the pastor standing next to the lay leader would be called a *2-shot*; the pastor flanked by a person on each side would be a *3-shot*. If a director wants more than three the request will be something on the order of, “Camera 3, give me the five people on the left of the group.” In fact, that is just the sort of request a director might make of a camera operator through the intercom system, particularly when using multiple cameras. It is this ability to use standard terminology to request a particular shot that makes for smooth video production. Consider the following control room scenario.

An experienced director noticing a group of young people waiting to participate in worship might say something like this: “Camera two, give me a shot of the group of five as tight as you can.” The camera operator unpacks that direction to produce a shot that includes all of the persons in the group, but as little space around the group as possible. Contrast that concise one-sentence direction with this direction: “Camera two, pan right. I want the group. A little tighter two. Tighter... oops too tight. Loosen it a bit. Good... hold.” Notice that not telling the camera operator what is wanted all at once, concisely, necessitates a whole string of directions. Camera operators soon learn to avoid working with directors who cannot articulate what they want. Likewise, directors soon learn to avoid using a camera operator who still is trying to learn what the word “pan” means. The point is that the activity of video production has a long tradition of using concise verbal commands to communicate the intent of the director to the rest of the crew. Being able to either articulate the command, or respond to a command appropriately, demands familiarity with the language of production.

Here are some other common terms used to help a camera operator get the shot desired by the director. To *pan* a camera is to move the camera on its mount to the left or the right. A command to “pan right” means that the front of the camera – the lens – moves from left to right; “pan left” produces the opposite movement. There is often a bit of confusion here. If a camera operator pans right, the subject will move to the left of the picture. A pan left will move the subject to the right in the picture. Beginning camera operators are liable to concentrate on where the subject is and move the camera in the wrong direction. One of the most frequently used command sequences in beginning television production classes goes like this: “Camera two pan left. No two, the other left.” A little patience is required but things get sorted out with a little time and experience.

A *tilt* is the vertical version of the pan. A tilt up is a command to move/point the camera lens in a more upward direction, that is in the direction of the ceiling. A tilt down is the indication to move the camera lens in a downward direction. It is not a good idea for a director to ask a camera operator to “pan up” or “pan down.” Over the years in response to students inevitably asking why no “pan up/down,” I offered the following explanation. Put someone behind a camera and tell him or her that on cue they will be asked to pan the camera right or left. You will note that the camera operator will stand with feet slightly apart and lined up next to each other. Making the “pan” movement smoothly demands good left/right balance, hence the stance just described. After a couple of pan movements tell the camera operator that he or she will be asked to do a series of “tilts.” In most cases you will note that the camera operator will shift his or her feet until one is slightly ahead of the other. That stance provides good balance for accomplishing a smooth tilt.

This example may seem rather nit-picky. However, in the case of a live-to-tape recording, the more the director can do to permit the camera operator, and the rest of the crew for that matter, to be prepared for what is coming, the smoother the production and the better the result. One of the ten commandments of television directing is that, "Thou shalt not leave thy camera operator wondering what his or her next shot is..." Experience has shown that it does make a difference.

Some practice of the kind normally provided in basic television production classes will generally suffice to prepare a director to handle simple directing chores in single or multiple camera projects. It will be up to those who have availed themselves of training to provide training for other crew persons. (For a discussion of crew recruitment and training, see Chapter 7, *Calling the Crew*.)

### **Keep the Tape**

Once videotape has been shot, and perhaps used in an edited production, there is a temptation to reuse the tape if it is not the program tape itself. B-roll tapes with cut-in and cut-way footage fit this description. Care should be taken to not discard B-roll or other production visuals too early. One reason to hold on to these visuals for a month or two at least is to give an opportunity for the discovery of some element of the production that could be enhanced by the use of B-roll or other materials. A second reason is that there are often corollary uses for such materials in adding elements to a web site, or possibly for some sort of publicity or promotional campaign. The rule of thumb is that the day after a given visual is utterly destroyed, it will be needed. If in doubt about future usefulness, save the visuals, at least for a while.

Once a production is done the videotape that holds the finished work is called the master tape, or in the case of an edited production, the edit master. It is important to have secure and environmentally friendly (to videotape) storage available. In addition to storing the master tapes, it is important to have available a first-generation duplicate of the master tape. The first generation duplicate videotape is called the duplicate master or the dub master. This is the tape that is used to produce copies of the videotape project. In the case of large scale copying, the duplicate master is sent to a commercial duplicating firm that will either keep the duplicate master in secure storage for future use in making copies or return it to the church for storage. If a church is planning on making batches of duplicates of a video project as needed, it is a good idea to let the duplicating company hold on to the duplicate master as they are equipped to properly store these items.

Under no circumstances should the original master tape be used for duplicating, loaning through the church library, or otherwise used for routine viewing. Videotapes do deteriorate with use, and although the process is gradual, the master tape should be subjected to as few "head passes" as possible. Incidentally, it is always a good idea to not rewind videotape, unless of course it is being returned to the local videotape rental store. When videotape is played the take up side of the cassette or reel contains tape that is tightly wound. Videotape stores best when it is wound tightly and the edges of the tape are thereby better protected. Simply remove videotape from the machine after use and then rewind it just before the next use rather than before storing the tape.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Extending the Reach: The Internet**

In the last several years the personal computer has become a part of the society in ways that are truly astounding. Just a few years ago the personal computer was actually the “Man of the Year” on the cover of Time magazine. The way people communicate has been forever changed by this incredible machine, which is also making tremendous strides in impacting the way we do business and even in our sense of “community.” The existence of virtual communities of persons united by common interests or ideals has radically reshaped how we think of community, potentially relegating “community” as a geographical term to secondary importance. The advent of the internet has indeed forced many institutions and businesses to redefine themselves and to approach their relationships with members or customers in new ways.

#### **Identity on the Internet**

In the midst of all of the technological change, churches are experimenting with ways to reach out to the world around them and communicate in an ongoing way with their membership. The use of the computer as a tool of discipleship seems secured. It is through deciding to use the internet and establishing a home page, or site, on the ever-growing world wide web (WWW) that a local church must come to grips with identifying itself and its ministry to the virtual world. The reason for this strong need to fashion and articulate an identity is due to the nature of the virtual community. The world has become a place of seeking and searching not only by getting in the family car and visiting a local church, but also by searching the internet for places of worship and for

communities, virtual and otherwise, of persons who share a vision of God at work in the creation.

Of the several tasks a local church must consider in deciding to utilize the resources of the internet in speaking to the world, the task of self-identification is both first and the most crucial. An example is found in the technological means of finding a community on the internet. Most web sites are designed to make it easy for prospective customers, members, or interested persons to find the site in the immense number of existing sites and the thousands of new sites being added each week. A web site design technique used to attract the search engines that enable searching for and finding particular sites is called the "meta tag." A meta tag is a description of the web site that is embedded in the computer code that is used to create the site. Search engines can read meta tags and present the results of a search to anyone who makes a search inquiry. For example a meta name could be something like, "Joe's Books. We can find any book in print!" Meta tags also use "keywords" that might include a list like this: "books, rare, in print..." Simply put, meta tags are a way of defining what the web site is all about and thereby what the business known as "Joe's Books" is all about.

This simple example illustrates the importance of a local church coming to terms with its own identity before embarking on reaching out to the world with a home page on the internet. However, that identity may be more difficult to establish than it initially appears. It would be useful for a Technology Task Force considering a world wide web presence to engage in the exercise of listing aspects of the church identity. Yes, the church name may be unique, although probably not in the world which the internet covers. But just naming the church is not going to be enough.

Develop a 'hook' to bring people to your page... The hook on my page is Book Clubs in general and Oprah Winfrey's Book Club in particular. It not only gives people a reason to come to my page, it gives them a reason to come back. I also have Whidbey Island and Freeland history pages along with a business directory. If someone is looking for a bookstore or books, they are probably not going to find me, but if they are looking for the Oprah Winfrey Book Club, Whidbey Island, or Freeland, they are very likely to see my site in the top of the list.<sup>19</sup>

Whether developing a home page on the internet for a book club, a business, ones self, or a local church, the idea is to make it possible for persons to find the world wide web site based on a search for some aspect or aspects of what that site represents.

### Uniqueness

What is it about a local church that uniquely identifies its character, the way it defines its ministry? A good place to start is to remember that it is actions that speak most clearly about a faith community. What is it that the local church does? What activities has the church engaged in to respond to God's call to ministry and service in the community? What aspects of the life of the church may be appealing to someone who is looking for a place to worship and has decided to use technology before using gasoline? Some churches take pride in a robust music program that seems to embrace nearly the entire congregation. A particular church comes to mind that has nine different choirs and annually provides a Christmas concert that is open to the entire community. Someone who finds that kind of activity featured on a world wide web site (commonly called a "home page" for the initial page a visitor will see on his or her computer) and who loves to sing will probably be very interested in making an in person visit some Sunday morning. Perhaps the home page visitor is someone in a family where there are young

<sup>19</sup> Martin S. Matthews and Eric B. Poulson, Frontpage 98: The Complete Reference (Berkley: Osborn/McGraw Hill, 1998), 661.



children. In that case a home page that contains information about the church school and the activities for youngsters in different age groups will be of more than casual interest.

It is important for a church to articulate clearly their overall mission or vision as well. Again, this is particularly true in the age of electronic communication when it is so easy to make a “virtual visit” to a church through a home page. Here is an example of a mission statement that could be included on a church web site.

We are Bethel Congregational Church, a member of the United Church of Christ, a Christ-centered community open to ALL people. It is our purpose to share Christ’s message of love and forgiveness with the world, and to provide a place, where all who come, can find comfort, hope, inspiration and friendship. We offer a traditional worship service, and foster individual freedom to question and explore traditional beliefs. Ultimately, it is our goal to nurture spiritual growth, to provide meaningful fellowship, develop a sense of mission for all ages, and build a faith, which is relevant in today’s world.<sup>20</sup> 2

Here, in part, is a founding vision statement that defines another Southern California church.

It is the dream of a place where the hurting, the hopeless, the discouraged, the frustrated and confused can find love, acceptance, guidance, and encouragement. It is the dream of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ with the hundreds of thousands of residents in south Orange County. It is the dream of 20,000 members growing together in spiritual maturity through Bible studies, seminars, retreats and fellowship loving, laughing, and learning together, understanding God’s wonderful plan and living life to its greatest potential. It is the dream of sending our hundreds of career missionaries and church workers all around the world and sending out our members by the thousands on short term mission projects to every continent. It is the dream of starting at least one new daughter church a year...<sup>21</sup> 3

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2 <sup>20</sup> Mission statement of Bethel Congregational Church in Ontario, California  
3 <sup>21</sup> Partial vision statement of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California

The differences in these two statements are obvious. Such statements are a useful way of helping a person locate, and hopefully visit, a particular church.

### **A Church Home Page**

Building a home page – a site on the internet – is not particularly difficult, but can be time consuming. Beyond creating the pages that make up a web site there is the ongoing task of keeping the site up to date. Unlike most means of communication that have a considerable “shelf life,” internet sites require periodic refreshing to stay listed in the search engines that comb the web looking for new or changed sites. In addition the virtual community has come to expect changes to web sites. In fact, there are online services that provide notices to their subscribers, often at no charge, whenever a particular web site has been changed. Regular updates are necessary if a web site is to be successful.

Many local churches have a site on the world wide web. Often the site is a labor of love by some member of the congregation who arranges for hosting and maintains the site. The only potential difficulty in that sort of arrangement is the “who’s in charge of the content?” issue. It is far better to have the content of a web site carefully planned, including scheduled updates by authorized persons, rather than simply be the occupation of one person who decides to establish an internet presence for a local church. Management by committee is often the subject of jokes because it can be very inefficient. However, in the case of the use of electronic media, particularly an internet presence where information sharing is the purpose, it is best to have the viewpoint of several persons selected to represent the entire church, and therefore a broader range of interests in the total church mission and ministry.

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### **An Inexpensive Start**

The Technology Task Force that plans and oversees the use of all technologies for the church is the logical place to begin planning for a web site and should designate the persons who will make up the web production team. The Technology Task Force has a real opportunity to attract persons to the technology ministry who might otherwise not be particularly interested in activities having to do with electronic media. Among those who might find working on a church web site particularly attractive are persons who have interests and abilities in writing, graphic design, promotion and “marketing,” and electronic publishing. There may be some cross over involvement by persons engaged in other media projects as well. For instance, someone who shoots still pictures for use in printed or video projects will find another outlet for their creative work in web pages.

One interesting and often helpful aspect of using the internet as part of the ministry of a local church is that an internet presence can be established with no capital outlay costs to the church. The ubiquity of the personal computer and the number of people who have developed first-rate computer literacy skills provides both a good source of person power and access to the needed technological resources. That is, the needed technology is likely already located in the home of a potential “web master” for the church. If the church budget permits, it is certainly useful to have computer capability at the church with access to the internet for purposes of updating and maintaining a web site. However, the creative work that goes into the basic assembly of an attractive internet presence is often best done by a web master (or a small group of them) working in their own familiar environment with familiar equipment.

Presuming someone with some even limited experience, it is possible to build a graphically simple, but fully functioning web site in about a day. In other words, a church can have a presence on the internet that provides such things as the church's mission/vision statement, the address and phone number of the church and perhaps key staff members, a listing of activities or groups within the church, and a means of contacting the church via electronic mail, all in a single day. This is possible because of the existence of inexpensive and readily available software that makes the task of crafting a basic web page relatively simple. It is not even necessary to know HTML<sup>22</sup> or some other specialized computer-related skill, although for sophisticated, highly interactive web sites such skills are very useful.

### **Internet Service Providers**

It would be very rare for a church to decide that they were going to host their own site on their own specialized computer server equipment. Such capability is expensive and unnecessary in order to have a robust and exciting internet presence. There are many internet service providers (ISP) who offer access to the internet to businesses, organizations, families and individuals. Most also provide what is called web site hosting. A web site host is a service that provides the server computers that actually hold the electronic information that makes up a web site. The web pages are transmitted to the ISP using file transfer protocols built into the software that is used to compose the pages. Internet service providers can also arrange for the inexpensive reservation of the particular name for the web site. These names, many of which double as the name of the enterprise itself as in the case of the online department store Amazon.com, are the uniform resource locator (URL) that one types into a web browser to be taken to that web

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<sup>22</sup> HTML stands for Hypertext Markup Language, the common means of constructing web pages.

site. A web site name can be reserved and activated in just a few days using one of the many services available.

Establishing a presence on the internet is surprising inexpensive. The cost of the software necessary to build and maintain web pages can be less than \$200. Most ISP's charge approximately \$20 per month to host a small web site; some services even provide hosting at no charge, but generally at the expense of having the web site include a fair amount of advertising in addition to the content provided by the site creator. The reservation of the site name/URL at this writing was priced at \$70 for a two-year registration. The only other cost is for access to the internet, which can vary from nothing at all to around \$50 per month depending on the kind of service, generally determined by access speed, desired. Once a local church has a web site URL, the needed software, and the services of an ISP to host the site and provide internet access, it is simply a matter of preparing the web pages themselves and transmitting them to the ISP.

### **Web Site Ingredients**

The elements that make up a web site for a local church depend on the ambitions of the web site team and the scope of programs within the church. However, there are some things that really must be included in order for the site to be useful. The basics were mentioned above and include information about the church, such as location and telephone number, and denominational affiliation. The second group of elements is called the service elements and includes the following information:

- Worship services – including times and “style” of service(s)
- Child care and services for physically challenged persons

- Sunday school activities, including adult religious education
- Activities organized around groups such as youth, single adults, married with children, or seniors
- The availability of parking (Yes, it is important.)
- Special programs for the needy such as a food bank
- The music ministry including choirs and other music groups
- Mid week services or gatherings.

This list is not all-inclusive but is a good starting point.

In building a web presence, it is important to start slowly and build over time. That accomplishes two important purposes. First, starting with a simple, basic informational site does not impose large demands on the web site team. Second, the very fact that the web site is growing is a good means of taking care of the need to keep the site fresh and changing to maintain repeat-visit interest. From the list of basic and potential elements to include, select only those that are crucial to allowing persons to visit or contact the church and that define the church in a general way. Use that selected list to craft the content for the first edition of the web site. There are many references available to help even the most inexperienced web site team to assemble a smoothly functioning, attractive and useful internet presence. Most of the reference materials relate to a particular software package and are often both a reference guide to accomplishing basic web site tasks and/or a tutorial that will take beginning web site builders through the process step by step.

Items from the list of desired web site elements that are not included in the first version of the site can be easily added, as they are made ready. In addition a simple web

site containing only text information can be enhanced with the use of graphics or pictures, even music and video clips are possible. Many web sites make use of animated effects and other means of maintaining a look and feel to the site as well as making navigating the site easier for visitors. However, as the site becomes larger and more sophisticated there is a danger in what is called “creeping elegance.”

Creeping elegance is the term applied to a peculiar malady that strikes computer programmers in particular (including web site creators) and results in a site becoming so intricate and full of “stuff” that it (1) takes what seems like hours to load and display on a visitors computer, and (2) is so full of options that it becomes impossible for a visitor to easily find their way around. The result of either of those frustrations is usually a click of the mouse button abandoning the attempted visit. The cure for creeping elegance is found in the KISS principle, defined elsewhere but worth mentioning again. The Keep It Simple Silly (KISS) principle is very important in the design of a web site.

In general a simple web site design consists of each page of the site being devoted to a single element that describes the church. For example the “home” page, the page the visitor first sees on their computer should identify the church, its location, denominational affiliation, and provide a means of contacting the church by telephone or electronic mail. That’s it. The only other elements really needed on the home page are the links to other pages where the bulk of the information about the church and its activities are maintained. Links allow a visitor to select, for example, “Staff,” and by clicking on that word or a button, be taken directly to the staff page which might contain the picture of that staff person (but perhaps not in the first version), their position and perhaps their direct phone number or electronic mail address.

Staying with the example staff page for a moment, it is easy to see how other elements could be added, such as an audio or video clip of a sermon, a welcome to our web site message in sound and/or video, information about their family, professional career, upcoming activities, links to published sermons, and on and on. The point is that there is a tremendous amount of information that *could* be made available to site visitors. The question, and the check against creeping elegance, is how much information *should* be made available. The best advice is to spend some time looking around the internet at what others have done and then considering what can be done with the resources available at the church. But if in doubt, leave the element out – at least of the early versions of the web site. Let the site grow in a controlled and deliberate way as a result of planning rather than spur of the moment inspiration. The resulting web site will be an internet presence that is esthetically pleasing to visitors, easy to navigate and understand, and easy for the web site team to update and otherwise maintain.

### **Maintenance and Administration**

One very important element of web site administration is the decision about who has administrative access to the web site (generally password protected), and therefore the ability to make changes and update information. If a church decides that one element, one page, of their website will include the sermon topics for the month, that decision will need to be agreeable to a pastor who will instantly be obligated for substantial advance preparation, and worked into the scheduled routine of the person responsible for maintaining that particular page in the site. If a similar decision is made, but using a week in advance time frame, the pastor will probably be grateful, but the updating becomes more crucial as a sermon information page will automatically have obsolete



information every Sunday afternoon. Visitors to a web site will not get a positive impression of a church that promotes the sermon for the coming Sunday, but does not have the information updated from the previous week until Thursday! The issue is the commitment to doing the updating and being sure that there is a person assigned to do the work. Of course, a backup person or two is an excellent idea.

It is important that a Technology Task Force review the workload and the staffing needs of a web site project as they would any other media project. The relationship of one project to another is sometimes only a matter of resource allocation among the extant projects. However, there are also opportunities to use one set of materials, still photographs for instance, in video projects, printed materials, the narthex bulletin board, and a church web site. One important role of the Technology Task Force is spotting opportunities for serendipitous multiple uses of media materials.

A church presence on the world wide web is a highly recommended part of the overall outreach program of the local church. The technological needs are easily met, the project does not require significant fiscal resources, and neither does a web site require significant human resources. What is required is planning, decision making with regard to the mission and services of the church to be represented, and a commitment to reaching out in joy to proclaim the good news of a church alive.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Calling the Crew**

Even a casual reading of the Gospels will reveal that much of what we know of Jesus' ministry includes time spent in selecting and teaching the disciples. Ultimately we are all called to discipleship, to learning what we can and using what we learn in the service of others. In the local church the opportunities for discipleship are many and in the use of technology there are wonderful ways to acquire skills and perform meaningful tasks. Like the work hoped for by the first disciples, the work of technology teams may well last far beyond the tenure of the team members themselves. Technology, like other means of preserving events, lends a kind of immortality to the good work of creating media projects.

In other chapters I stressed that using technology is labor intensive. I have suggested that training and building teams dedicated to producing successful projects is an on-going effort. There will always be turnover in crew rosters. That is a positive thing in that new crew folks bring new ideas and skills and fresh energy to the work. However, turnover is also a challenge because the need to train crew participants is frequent. What follows are some techniques for developing a crew roster so that when the project date has arrived the human resources will be ready and able.

#### **Congregation as Crew**

In theatre and broadcasting there is something known as the "crew call." The crew call is the time that the crew is supposed to be at work, in place, and ready to begin. Calling a crew is a job that will have to be done at a local church and it is important that the task be given to someone who has skills for managing detail and a good deal of

perseverance. In my graduate school days the person calling television production crews never had to wonder where I was; I needed the experience and the money. In a church production situation there is liable to be somewhat greater difficulty in getting the right people assembled to do a particular project. First of all, the positions will not generally be paid. And, people who are inclined to volunteer lead incredibly busy lives with many conflicting demands on their time. Successfully calling the crew is a matter of dealing with several factors: consistency, training and qualifications, mentoring, apprenticeships, assignment rotation, and staff depth.

People who work in media production tend to specialize in one area. A capable cameraperson does not usually participate in audio mixing. A good editor rarely ventures into a studio to floor manage. In church related production there are liable to be those who can “double in brass,” but most often people will tend to want to perform a task with which they are comfortable. Having people specialize in a particular crew assignment does provide consistency that is reflected in the look and feel of video production. For example, years of directing public television fund-raising events with volunteer camera operators has shown that some camera operators have a flair for the interesting closeup and can be relied on to find those shots with little or no prompting from the control room. Other camera operators do not move a muscle, let alone the camera, until told exactly what to do. Both “styles” of camera operation are useful, but a mix of styles makes more interesting television. The point is that through specializing in a particular task some people discover unique and useful abilities.

In studio situations where there is a lot of activity and visual interest, directors often prefer to call camera operators who are constantly on the lookout for something

interesting that they can show the director on the control room monitor for that camera. Often a director needs to offer little instruction other than something like, "Camera two, find me something else." In the ensuing seconds the operator of camera two will try one shot after another, holding on each one for a few seconds in order to give the director time to say, "I'll use that two. Two hold." What is happening is a kind of consistency of style of production enabled by a relationship between the director and the camera operator, each knowing the working style of the other. This is a benefit of consistency in calling a crew.

The difficulty with consistency in church related production is that it may not be possible due to the inevitable conflicts that happen when using non-paid volunteer crew people. Another difficulty is found in the boredom that may happen if a person is "stuck" with the same job for too long a period of time. People will put up with lack of variety when paid to do a job; volunteers need to have the stimulation of something new every so often.

### **Rotation and Training**

One way to keep crew participation interesting is to provide for crew assignment rotation. Assignment rotation means that as soon as a person is qualified in more than one production job they can expect to rotate between those jobs. For example, in a busy church that does Sunday morning worship taping a person qualified as a camera operator and as assistant director might expect to spend one month at one job and then, after a week or two break, perhaps three or four weeks at a different job. This kind of rotation provides for some consistency and for the refreshing boost of something new when a person rotates to a different position.

Crew schedules developed using the rotation concept also provide for the kind of consistency needed for on-going projects because not all crew positions need to be rotated at the same time. In other words, it is not good scheduling to begin each month of production of sanctuary worship with a whole new crew. The only reason to rotate assignments in that manner would be to encourage the production director to quit! The disadvantage of staggered rotation schedules for crews is the task of keeping track of who is doing what and when. This is a job that should be left to someone on the church staff paid to manage detail. If at all possible, crew calling is a task that should be given to a reliable church secretary. Incidentally, posting the crew roster on a page on the church web site is an excellent way of getting all the production crews notified. Another tool for doing the job of notifying all crews is group email.

In the rotation example it was assumed that a person might rotate between two different crew responsibilities. Unless a crew person has been professionally trained in video production, two or three crew positions should be regarded as maximum. It is fine, and a good idea, to let everyone on a video production team sample all of the available positions. That is one way for people to discover which responsibilities they find most interesting and for which they feel most capable. The rotation technique applied to training sessions provides a convenient means for people to experiment with something new outside of the pressures of actual production.

A favorite technique of instruction in television production is to use an assignment rotation to “call a crew” for in-class production exercises. The concept is very simple. A sheet is passed out to all in the class session that lists the production exercises and the crew assignments for each (an example appears in Appendix A). A

person who is operating camera one in lab assignment one, might rotate to camera three for the second lab assignment, and to floor manager for the third and so on. By the-end of a three-hour class period each person in the class has been at each crew position at least once. These kinds of sessions are great fun for students and a very enjoyable way to offer training in production for church volunteers.

It is a good idea to offer training sessions for new and existing crew persons three or four times each year. Each training session will take from three to four hours, depending on group size, and need to be very carefully planned to avoid having people standing around with nothing to do. Since advance planning is so necessary it is best to know exactly – or as near to exactly as possible – how many people are going to come for training at any particular session. A signup sheet with a cut off date is really necessary.

Many church leaders complain that people just do not sign up in advance, but just show up at the time of the event. At the risk of making people unhappy, someone who just shows up without having signed up should be offered the opportunity to either fill in for someone who signed up but was unable too actually attend, or the opportunity to sit and watch. I must identify a bias here that is the product of many years of working with volunteer crews. In my view any successful production requires a reliable crew. One way to achieve reliability is to set standards for attendance, including training, that require making intent to participate clear. It is important to make that policy clear from the beginning, including an explanation of why the policy is adopted.

One other policy should be rigidly enforced. People who are perpetually late for production assignments waste the time of everyone who arrives on time. In years of directing community theatre events I explained that I was a “stickler” for punctuality

because rehearsal time was valuable and a person who arrived 10 minutes late, to a rehearsal with a cast of 10, had automatically wasted one and one half hours of rehearsal time – 10 minutes each for nine people equals ninety minutes. Experience has shown that most people quickly grasp the importance of honoring their commitments barring a genuine emergency and cases of having to remove a crew person from the roster should be quite rare. However, policies with regard to notifying with regard to intent to participate and punctuality should be gently but firmly observed from the very beginning.

There is another method of providing crew training that will work very well for a church production roster. That method is called the “senior colleague” method. This method can be used in conjunction with training sessions as described above, or with care during actual production. The senior colleague is a person who the Technology Task Force has included on a crew roster as prepared in a particular crew responsibility. For example, in calling a crew for a particular Sunday morning videotaping the church secretary, in his or her crew boss capacity, would call a camera operator and a senior colleague camera operator for the same camera. The less experienced camera operator then has the opportunity to work with someone who “knows the ropes.”

This technique has been shown to be effective, but some cautions should be mentioned. First, it is not a good idea to call a trainee and a senior colleague for more than one, two at most, position during any one production. Video production is a pressure cooker atmosphere even when everything is going smoothly. When things are not going smoothly the best that will be observed is controlled chaos. The presence of persons who are still learning will add some additional stress in terms of the number of things that can go wrong. Therefore, it is best to minimize the additional stress by not

having more than one or two learners on the production roster. The degree of hands on participation by the beginning person should be left to the discretion of the senior colleague and subject, if necessary, to the further discretion of the production director. It is also wise to follow the practice of requiring some non-production training participation before including a new crew person, with a senior colleague, in actual production. For example, one technique successfully employed to train radio station operating engineers was to follow some “formal instruction” with several sessions of hands on training in the company of a senior colleague prior to scheduling the new engineer on their own.

### **Pride and Conflicts**

What has been described thus far builds on the theme of people working successfully together to do something that they enjoy and which has lasting value for the church and community. Central to successfully using volunteers in video production work is instilling a sense of pride in the work being done. It is also vitally important to remember that in any human activity where there is a desired outcome at the end of the work, there are bound to be disagreements about what the outcome ought to look like and how to achieve it. Simply put, there are going to be disagreements.

It is good to talk about disagreements as a normal occurrence and thereby acknowledge that there is nothing wrong with differences of opinion, provided civility remains the prevailing atmosphere. Sometimes pressure and excitement, often combined with the presence of healthy egos, causes disagreements to become arguments. This is normal and ought not be regarded as shocking in a church community. After all, most churches have experience with disagreements of one sort or another quite apart from



technology related projects. What is crucial is that disagreements are handled promptly and predictably.

There are infamous stories of cast members in live theatre productions who deliberately were late for an entrance, or deliberately moved a prop, or committed some other mischief because they were upset. Perhaps major name talent can get away with that sort of behavior, but a Technology Task Force faced with that sort of problem needs to take action promptly. It is not appropriate to suggest here what ought to be done when disagreements erupt in ways that are counter productive other than to say that the disagreement must not be permitted to become manifest in the work of the project. When that happens the project will certainly suffer, but more importantly the credibility of the entire technology enterprise may be called into serious question. It does alas happen that a church production is scrapped because of quarreling among the participants.

The simple fact is that churches do not always handle conflicts efficiently. We are taught to care for our church family and that love of neighbor is central to Christian behavior. Those teachings are absolutely valid, but need to be observed within the context of the whole church, or at least of a successful project. Why is this an issue of particular importance in technology-based production? The answer is found in the fact that such production is a collaborative and creative effort. Those who engage in creative activities become personally very invested in what they are doing and tend to view challenges to their creativity as personal attacks. The person responsible for production will need some skills in being a non-anxious presence in the midst of conflict and ready to observe, consult and then promptly make whatever decision is necessary to end the conflict and successfully complete the project.

Ultimately what is required to insure a good working atmosphere for church related production is for participants to remember that there is a greater good possible when the work is done. That success is surely more important than the opinion of any single individual. Christ taught that those who would be first would need to be the servant of all. If church related production is done in that kind of atmosphere, acknowledging that we human beings are prone to consider self-interest as priority one, and finding ways to insure that disagreements can be discussed and handled, then the production experience will be joyful and tremendously exciting. Perhaps one way to think of participation on a production crew for ones church is to remember that the whole crew is called to the best that may yet be by a loving God who will surely enjoy the fruits of our collaborative labors.

## Chapter 8

### Post-production: Wrapping It Up

Earlier chapters have included reference to the activities that happen once a production has been recorded or photographed. Those activities are generally called “post-production” and usually require the use of specialized equipment. Post-production is common in production for broadcast or in the making of motion pictures, but is not absolutely necessary in church productions. There are two reasons for this. First, some enhancements to a production of the kinds normally done in post-production can be done during the recording process. This “effects on the fly” approach is not uncommon in those projects that utilize multiple video sources and a control room. The second reason for not doing post-production has to do with resources; post-production can be expensive in terms of time and the needed technology.

Post-production is usually closely tied to the editing process. For example, if B-roll footage is used to enhance a single camera video production (as discussed in Chapter 3), the editing process is also an excellent time to add such effects as titles or other text to the video. In a simple one camera interview, the name of the interviewee and perhaps the date of the recording can be added to the video in post-production during the same time that is also devoted to inserting shots from the B-roll. The process is quite simple using a device called a character generator that simply superimposes text, and sometimes limited graphics, over the video image. This equipment is also used to supply the opening titles to a project and for adding the closing credits naming those who played a part in the project.

Modern equipment has made it possible to do truly astounding effects in post-production. But effects that involve substantial manipulation of a picture, such as having the picture appear to assemble itself from many small pieces, require sophisticated hardware such as, in the case mentioned, a matrix wipe generator. In virtually all cases the use of this kind of equipment will be well beyond the budget and the needs of a local church. Moreover, the time required to utilize such capabilities with skill and discretion is substantial. The approach outlined in this chapter continues the theme of keeping the production simple and manageable.

The kind of post-production really needed for a project depends on the presence of these effects, all of which are common in relatively simple post-production: music; titles, credits and slates; and logos and graphics. Even relatively ambitious church production should not require special effects beyond these.

### **Using Music**

Music can add a great deal to even the simplest of productions. For many years the narrated slide presentation was a common “multi-media” technique, and one that is still popular today. A collection of still images on 35mm slides is projected on one or more screens. Often the narration is done using an audio cassette player that is synced to the slide projectors so that the desired slide, or slides, is shown at precisely the right moment. And often the narration tape includes music as well as the voice of the narrator. The music is added using an audio mixer in post-production. The narrator reads the script into a microphone while the person doing the audio mix controls the volume of the music. The music and the voice are recorded on the tape and the post-production work is done.

Audio mixing is an art, but it can be learned using simple equipment to the extent necessary to provide the audio portion of a church project. This is a splendid volunteer opportunity for someone who has recording experience or has spent some time around a radio station. But even absent some prior experience, some experimenting with various kinds of music and a willing narrator will yield satisfactory results.

Another use of music is found in video productions where rather than the music being present during the whole production it is heard only at the beginning and end of the project. Music used in this manner is generally called theme music. It is relatively easy to find music useful as a theme on recordings; in fact there are recordings available of music that has been written for use as theme music. It might also be fun to enlist the services of a musician from within the church to compose and perform a simple theme melody that can be reused each time a particular kind of production is done. The theme music is usually quite short, rarely longer than a minute, and is added to the audio track of a video project during post-production.

Generally the theme music is heard at the very beginning of a project, lasts through the opening titles, and then fades out just as the spoken portion of the project begins. Some themes, particularly those that are pre-recorded for use in post-production, use both music and an “announcer” to start or end a production. This common technique can be traced to the early days of broadcast radio when popular programs had a very identifiable musical theme and featured the voice of an announcer at both the beginning and the end of the program. The technique has carried over into modern television broadcasting and can be heard any evening at the start and the finish of the local news broadcast.

Because the use of a theme, with or without accompanying voice announcement, is so ubiquitous in broadcasting, it is a technique that lends itself well to even simple church production because it is part of the “grammar of media.” In broadcasting the theme is designed to attract attention and keep listeners or viewers “tuned in.” In church production, the theme serves as a graceful way of beginning and ending a production.

The beginning theme is the audio portion of a video production and generally coincides with the video that identifies the production by name, perhaps mentions a specific “title,” and may include the names of the participants. Most beginning themes are relatively short, often no more than 10 or 15 seconds. The closing theme of the production may be a bit longer because the accompanying visual elements may take a bit more time. Closing themes are often heard during the production “credit roll.”

### **Credits and Slates**

The credit portion of a production usually consists of the following kinds of information. First, the name of the production project may be repeated, followed by the name of the person or persons featured in that production, followed by the names of the persons who participated, sometimes including the specific role each participant played in the project. The last element in the credits is usually the name of the producing entity, in this case the name of the local church. The most familiar kind of credit roll these days is found at the end of the feature motion picture, and they can be very extensive and detailed. Credit rolls appear in broadcasting as well, but they are often abbreviated, sometimes omitted altogether, and sometimes simultaneously share the screen with an announcement about an upcoming program. Sometimes broadcast credits include the mention of a sponsor, or in the case of non-commercial broadcasting, an underwriter. A

church production could identify those who provided specific support for the project. In local productions the credits should serve the very useful purpose of thanking everyone who played a part in the production effort.

There is another visual text element that is important for virtually all recorded projects called the slate. A slate is a simple addition of needed information at the beginning of the tape that holds a given production. The slate contains the following information:

- Then name (title) of the project, such as "Interview with John Doe"
- The date the interview was recorded
- The name of the producer
- The length of the project expressed in minutes and seconds, as in 15:30

In broadcast quality recordings, the slate includes several seconds of color bars and a steady state audio tone, followed by what is called academy leader or simply countdown leader. The countdown leader is named for the stock film that used to be spliced to the start of a feature film before duplicating and which contained a numerical countdown from 10 to about three seconds. The last three seconds were black and signaled the imminent start of the feature. The practice continues in videotape production, although electronically generated for recording in the case of videotape rather than physically spliced, and is useful for cuing a videotape to the start of the actual production.

### **Graphics and Logos**

Sometimes a graphic or logo is used in a production, particularly as a means of identifying the project and/or the producing entity. In a local church a really very nice production logo could be derived from a drawing of the church. If there is a person in the

congregation who has some ability with pen and ink, an attractive rendering of the church building could be prepared especially for video production use. In that event there is also the advantage of having the graphic logo/drawing in correct aspect ratio.

Aspect ratio is the way of describing the horizontal and vertical elements of the television receiver or video monitor. The aspect ratio for all but the latest high definition video is three units by four units. That is a television monitor might be designed to display an image that is approximately 9 inches vertical dimension by 12 inches horizontal dimension; if each unit is three inches, that yields an aspect ration of 3 by 4. This ratio is useful to anyone who is preparing original art or graphics such as a "title card" for use in production. The work can be planned to conform to the 3 by 4 aspect ratio. That permits original work to be place on an easel, with appropriate lighting, and then recorded on videotape or slide film for later use.

### **Managing Post-Production**

Finally, in this discussion of things to be accomplished in post-production time, is a group of tasks that are administrative in nature, but need to be included in the post-production work. Video production of any sort needs to be done with due respect for rights and clearances. Clearances are simply records of permission for the use of the recorded voice and/or visual images of a participant. One of the tasks of the producer of any project is to secure the signed consent of every person who appears in the production. There should be no exceptions to this policy. In a church setting a clearance document can be worded to allow for all recordings made by the church of that person. That is, one clearance can serve multiple projects if desired. The only drawback to the "blanket" project clearance is in maintaining clearance records when they span more than one



project. This is not difficult to accomplish, clearance forms can simply be filed by name, but blanket clearances do require the producer to either get a clearance signed at the time of production or verify that a clearance is on file.

There is a temptation in churches to take everyone at his or her word. A willingness to participate in a video project would seem to be sufficient “clearance” and obviate the need for a formal signed form. If all churches existed without any sort of internal discord whatsoever, then clearances would be unnecessary. Unfortunately, we humans are known to have the occasional falling out. It would be a shame for one disgruntled parent to be able to sabotage the viewing of a Christmas pageant in which their child portrayed one of the magi. The intent here is not to practice law without a license and argue how the lack of a clearance might be viewed, or the relative merits of implied consent. The intent is to urge a simple good business practice. The old saying is true that “good fences make good neighbors.” In video production it is equally true that good clearances make risk free video projects possible.

The other issue that needs careful attention in the post-production administrative detail wrap up is the issue of rights. “Rights” is the shorthand way of describing permission to use property subject to the provisions of copyright protection. Generally, if a church is not planning on large-scale sale of video projects or for the broadcast of video projects, copyright is not really an issue. The kinds of production elements subject to copyright law include things like music, particularly recorded music, objects of art, and photographic images (including film and video). It is always wise to check with the holder of a copyright to see if the intended use is permissible, such as a music clip used as a theme. In most cases there will be no problem, but permission should be gotten in

writing and strict attention paid to such requirements as mentioning the name of the copyright holder in credits or accompanying material.

Most churches have an attorney or two in the congregation. The Technology Task Force would do well to secure a quick review of intended use to be made of materials created by someone other than the church production team. Copyright law should rarely be a significant issue, but it is wise to check long before borrowing a particularly attractive graphic image and reproducing it as background for a videotaped choir concert. Murphy's Law will dictate that the use will be noticed by the creator of the graphic who will be much less than pleased, particularly if the concert videotapes are made available for sale to the congregation or beyond. Simply put, the lessons of common courtesy apply. Ask first!

All documents pertaining to rights, clearances, special permissions obtained, and the like should be carefully filed along with the master recording of the project. One way of doing that efficiently is to give each production project its own unique number. That number may serve a variety of functions. For example a production number can be used to identify expenses, or revenues, in a budget. The number can also be used to track which year a production was done if the number is created so that a project number like 2000-01 would be the first project done in the year 2000. Each filed document should contain the production number. The production number should appear in the production slate as well. In the case of very large numbers of production records, the production numbers can be keys to a computerized database indicating the location of records and master recordings.

Post-production is that group of tasks, both creative and administrative, that makes it easy to maintain a record of the local church that will become increasingly valuable over the years. Technology based projects capture a moment in time and allow churches to trace their growth as a community of faith in exciting and powerful ways unlike any other kind of record keeping. The records of the collective journey preserved in images, words, music and even art are testimony to the presence of a loving God who smiles on our progress toward the best and brightest future that may yet be while building on and honoring all that has gone before.

## **Chapter 9**

### **The Technology Task Force at Work**

The Technology Task Force has been mentioned several times in the foregoing as the group within the church that accepts the responsibility for planning and administration of the technology effort. This chapter deals with the creation of that group of people and their responsibilities, especially planning and budgeting. The model that will be presented is designed for churches of all sizes because the use of technology in the ministry of the local church is an undertaking that demands careful attention to many details and cannot, therefore, be successfully added to the responsibilities of another group such as the board of trustees. The assumption is that the Technology Task Force (TTF) is under the direction of the main governing body of the local church.

#### **The Task Force in the Church Structure**

It is a good idea to deal with the TTF in the local church constitution or other chartering document. This is necessary because the TTF will be responsible for expenditures, possibly for the receipt of monies, and will need therefore to have the authority to do necessary business. At a minimum, the creation of the Technology Task Force should appear in the official minutes of the governing body of the local church. Simply put, the Technology Task Force must not be simply an ad hoc group within the church. The formal definition of the TTF provides for appropriate recognition of authority to conduct the activities they plan and as authorized by the church governance, and for the means of constituting the TTF itself.

Depending on the size of the church and the scope of intended projects in any given year, the size of the TTF should be somewhere between 5 and 11 members, including the chairperson. There are many ways to constitute the task force but one way that should be avoided is to have the TTF composed of representatives from other committees, such as the budget committee, publicity committee, etc. The reasons for this are three fold. First, the work of the TTF will be on going rather than “seasonal” and therefore demand a fair amount of time and attention on a regular basis. The second reason is related in that it is difficult for one person to serve effectively on two committees in those times when the workload is especially heavy in one committee or the other. For example, the budget committee is normally busy during the months just before the turn of the fiscal year. The budget committee membership will have quite enough to do without having to worry about the current technology work. The final reason for service exclusively on the TTF is a matter of securing appropriate expertise. The nature of the activities of the TTF will ideally result in the group having, to admittedly varying degrees, either strong interest in technology or another area appropriate to the scope of responsibilities of the task force, experience in an appropriate field, or both. The group should be well connected to the rest of the church governance structure, but be a separate group.

The initial composition of the Technology Task Force should be made up of those interested and carefully selected individuals who are willing to devote, in cases after the first few years of existence of the task force, more than a single year to task force service. Terms should normally be for periods of two or even three years and should be arranged so that not all members leave the task force in the same year. Providing for varying term

lengths just for the “charter” group will accomplish that objective. I favor the selection of the chairperson of the task force by the task force members themselves. Experience has shown that the task force members are in the best position to make an informed decision based eventually on their experience with each other. The chair can be selected annually without loss of continuity.

It is also worth considering the total length of time a church member can serve on the Technology Task Force without a breather. It may be possible to conform to other church governance group policies in this regard, but the infusion of fresh ideas as a function of good leadership suggests no more than a couple of successive terms in any one tenure. These are certainly not hard and fast “rules” but suggestions based on the successful experience of many non-profit organizations engaged in creative work. In a church context it is good to remember that all are called to exercise the gifts of God in discipleship, so spreading the opportunity as widely as possible makes good theological sense as well. The broad scope of work of the TTF enables this openness to many gifts.

The Technology Task Force has work to do in several areas that will allow for participation by persons with expertise that is not strictly related to technology or its application. The ultimate best composition will be a group of persons who can make meaningful contributions in the several areas that will be discussed. For example, someone on the task force may take primary responsibility for the necessary personnel resources. That charge will call for good human relations skills and, if possible, familiarity with the kinds of tasks crew folks will be doing as projects get underway.

## **Planning and Budgeting**

The “bottom line” is the hard fact reality that places limits on ambition. Years of asking talented, creative, and eager production persons to explain “one more time” why a certain expenditure was necessary—and then having to cut it from the proposed budget—never resulted in that task getting easier! But the proverbial “buck” must stop somewhere. For the local church it stops with the church governing board, which must ultimately allocate the resources necessary to both capitalize and operate a technology utilization program. For the Technology Task Force the decision-making process should generally replicate that which is customary in the church as a whole. Not all projects proposed are going to result in production. But the process should be prayerful, fair, and absolutely open to observation by any and all interested persons. The TTF is, of course, responsible for the plan, expressed as a proposed budget. However, every effort should be made to inform the congregation about what is being considered. That openness breeds positive feelings about the work, a sense of genuine excitement, even interest in active participation. There is a tendency in churches to have budget development remain a great mystery to most. The Technology Task Force should strive to have budget and planning a mystery to no one.

There are many ways of building a budget. However, for the Technology Task Force an excellent budget and an expenditure plan expressed as production project goals can be combined in a “one and five year plan.” Because such a document covers more than a single fiscal year, it functions as a planning document as well as a set of budget proposals for both operating expenses (commonly called the OE budget) and for capital expenses, including if desired, provisions for a sinking fund for major capital

replacement. The advantage to the one and five year plan method of goal setting and budgeting is that it is much easier to consider the long term implications of both project aspirations and available resources.

The hardest part of doing a one and five year plan is doing it for the first time. Of necessity the first version of a one and five year plan is essentially a look at five years of projected activity. That is a difficult exercise. Many people are familiar with setting a budget one year at a time, but not everyone is used to setting first a goal driven budget and, second, a budget that spans several years. The idea may take some getting used to and it is very likely that the plan will evolve substantially each year. In fact, that is the purpose of such a planning and budgeting technique. The methodology for the actual construction of a one and five year plan is beyond the present scope, but here are some general suggestions.

First, start with a solid set of goals for the first year of technology utilization, with a line item budget that reflects each of those goals in detail. There should not be a single expense for any project that is not included. If the expense is funded from some other budget source, then that source must be identified. For example, if routine office supplies like pens and paper are generally budgeted in the church general operating budget, then the technology task force should make a good faith estimate of the supplies the production crews will likely consume and plan to have those actually on hand. Next to the budget line item that says "office supplies" should be the notation "church general operating budget" and if possible an account number in that budget. This may sound complicated, but remember it is designed to serve the very important purpose of being sure that nothing needed has been overlooked – including how it will be paid ~~for~~. ✓



Keep capital and operating expense items separate. The capital items are things like cameras, tape recorders and lighting instruments. These items have a life that usually spans several years and are usually not charged against any particular project but are designated as supporting all applicable projects. In planning a capital items budget component it is very important to identify the projected life of the piece of equipment or other durable item. It is a good idea to seek the advice of persons who are familiar with the kind of item being budgeted to ascertain a service life and to get information with regard to maintenance costs for use in developing the operating budget. Each proposed equipment expenditure should include price (including reliable applicable discounts available to religious organizations), estimated useful service life in years, and estimated annual maintenance expense. The first figure (the cost of the item) goes in the capital budget, properly identified by name, brand, model and included features or options. The remaining figures are held for inclusion in the operating budget if the capital item is included in the overall technology budget.

Consumable items such as videotape and office supplies belong in the operating expense budget. Videotape, while reusable in some circumstances, is really a consumable item. Remember that it is suggested that videotapes of the original production be kept even after completion of a final edited master tape, at least for some time. So each video production has a consumable tape component that must be budgeted.

It should also be noted that the operating budget sometimes does not include items that it should because such items as heat and lights and telephone are budgeted someplace else. That kind of budgeting is very poor budgeting indeed. The fact is that expenses must be paid and if the production folks are going to run up the light bill, then some of

the light bill ought to be charged to the production budget. This is the sort of thing that makes administrators happy and often drives producers quietly crazy. But there is a simple way to handle the expenses that are difficult to estimate because, even though everyone can see the logic of people in the building using lights, no one is sure how to figure out how much that actually costs for a specific activity.

The easiest way to handle these kinds of real but difficult to capture expenses is to set an administrative overhead amount for the activity. That can be a set percentage of the aggregate budget for technology that is allocated in the church general operating budget where expenses like lights and telephone are already listed. One budgeting general caveat: no budget area should get a free ride.

There should be no dollar amount in the budget that is not directly connected to one or more specific production goals. The best way to check this is to have a column that parallels the budget dollar amounts column and which contains the specific objectives, usually identified by number, that are supported by that dollar amount. Similarly, there should be no dollar amount that is not tied to a budget item. Here another caveat is in order. Beware of the use of too many "contingency" or worse yet "miscellaneous" items with dollar amounts attached to them. If a number has been proposed, the number had to come from some thought about what it is for. The "what" it is for should be named to the maximum extent possible. This is not to say that there is no use for contingency line items, but the use should be for only what is deemed really necessary to cover an unforeseen circumstance. Once the first year plan and budget is completed, and perhaps even approved, the years two through five should be undertaken.

There are several temptations in developing budgets and plans for years two through five. One temptation is to simply replicate the items from year one in year two and perhaps beyond. While it often is true that a project will be repeated in successive years (such as the project described in chapter three), it is wise to attach as much detail to the project specifics for succeeding years as possible. Here is an example. Suppose that in the first budget year of a one and five year plan, it is budgeted to shoot 10 interviews with congregation members. The plan is supported by an overall objective to record as many members of the congregation as possible based on criteria developed by the Technology Task Force. A good production budget should reflect which persons would be the subjects of a single camera video interview by naming each of the ten budgeted interviews with the name of the interviewee. Then in succeeding years the naming process is continued so that there is an actual goal and method driving the recurring expense. Recurring budget items that are specifically named should have a much better chance of “holding on” clear to the final version of the budget than unnamed recurring expenses.

Of course each year may see the addition of projects that are not recurring expenses. It is often more difficult for a new project to “break in” to the budget cycle than ought to be the case. For what are often good reasons, recurring projects tend to take on a life of their own. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but eliminating a long-standing project, even if it is virtually completed or has otherwise outlived its usefulness in the overall technology program of the church, is often difficult to do. This is particularly true if the project is identified with some particular group of people who are going to be unhappy at its demise. This is another excellent reason for being sure that the budgeting process is as

open to the entire congregation as possible. A project is easier to eliminate if everyone has been informed of the reason(s) for the decision.

The last year or two of a one and five year plan is obviously more difficult to do in terms of detail in either project specification and goals or expenses. For that reason, a one and five year plan tends to become more general in the latter years. However, it must be remembered that even the general framework is useful as a guide for the annual revision of the one and five year plan. In the annual planning and budgeting cycle each year of the plan moves toward year one. What had been a fairly general outline, with general budget projections for a given calendar or fiscal year, becomes increasingly detailed and accurate as the years go by.

There is another function served by the one and five method of budgeting and planning and that is capital planning. Equipment does not last forever. It is truly maddening to prepare budgets for an entity that does not recognize the importance of advance planning for major expenditures. A good example of how not to budget is found in the budgeting practices – albeit mandated by statute – in some states that prohibit capital budgeting over several years. In that sort of system one may get a project funded for one year and get the project started, only to lose funding for “phase two” the next year. I want to strongly suggest that church capital funding not adopt the “fund one year and pray for the next” strategy when making capital funding plans.

There is even a way of handling the capital expense of equipment replacement by adopting and budgeting in a kind of “pay as you go” manner. This is done with what is often called a sinking fund. In a sinking fund an amount is budgeted and actually accounted for by some method such as a savings account deposit each year with the fund

account dedicated for the replacement of a specific equipment item. The amount needed each year is calculated by dividing the estimated replacement price of the item (in dollars) by the estimated useful service life (in years) and accounting for the rate of return if the money is deposited in an interest bearing (and it should be) account. This is often difficult for non-profits to do since most non-profits cannot afford to allocate cash for capital item replacement in lieu of the operating expense budget. However, it is a goal to be strived for, and another reason for a local church to have a planned giving program in place. Planned giving is an excellent way of providing for future capital expenses.

### **Caring ~~For~~<sup>f</sup> Human Resources**

Organizations that rely on volunteers to do the work that paid staff does in the private sector must pay special attention to recruiting and maintaining a volunteer base. Some organizations rely on volunteers at crucial times to such an extent that paid staff are assigned the full-time responsibility of being sure the non-paid, volunteer workers are fed and other wise comfortable. One state public television network provides snacks and meals for large numbers of volunteers. Restaurants, grocers, and wholesalers donate the food, but paid staff coordinates the effort. A local church will not need to provide catering for production teams, but the point to be made is that volunteers do need “care and feeding.”

It has been suggested in the chapter dealing with postproduction that all who work in a technology project deserve recognition in the credits at the end of the production. But recognition of all of the people who make the work of the Technology Task Force possible should be provided by listing these people in an annual church report and by planning something like a lunch or supper to say thank you. Jesus did not require thanks,

but Jesus also did not turn down the anointing with wonderful ointment and the washing of his feet either. Saying “well done” to the good and faithful servants who handle the technology projects is the right thing to do. This is the direct responsibility of the Technology Task Force and the costs for appropriate recognition should be included in the operating expense budget.

Saying thanks to the crew folks might be a once in a year activity, but seeing to it that the right crew people are ready and available for the projects as planned is an on-going responsibility. One person on the TTF should be designated as the personnel officer for the projects. That person should work closely with the church secretary, or whoever on the church staff has been delegated the task of preparing the crew rosters and making them public. The TTF personnel person is responsible for providing guidance about the crew needs for each project and for being sure that the crew that are asked to work on a project are qualified to do so. Ideally, the TTF personnel person will also have first hand familiarity with any crew training program that has been established. He or she will also want to be sure that even simple crew member applications provide an opportunity for interested participants to state specific training or experience they may have acquired. The idea is for the TTF person to match the needs of the project with the capabilities of the available volunteer crew folks. If the church happens to have a personnel specialist from the business world in the congregation, there may be an opportunity to enlist the assistance of that person in this important work and ministry.

### **Quality Control**

In the best of all possible worlds every project will be well planned and will proceed from start to finish smoothly and trouble free. Unfortunately we do not live in a perfect

world and things are going to go wrong from time to time. The Technology Task Force should be the final word on whether or not a project is acceptable. That is a difficult charge because of the significant human relations needs that must be managed. But difficult as it will be to say that a project needs to be redone, or, as a worst case, scrapped due to quality problems, the TTF must be able to do that when necessary for several reasons.

First, any project committed to film or tape is from that moment on representing the entire church community. We live in an age that has come to expect as routine very high quality video production. Certainly no reasonable person will expect a local church to compete with professional broadcast level production. However, the work of the church must also not resemble the first afternoon experiment of someone who has just bought a video camera. Reasonable quality is a must. Second, the people who appear in the productions have a right to not be embarrassed by out of focus videography, distorted audio, misspelled names in credits or video supers, or inept interviewing. Finally, the local church takes pains to keep the parking lot swept, the lawn mowed, the sanctuary vacuumed and dusted because of the importance of the activity that takes place in God's church. No less attention should be paid to that which represents the church in the community.

If, in the judgment of the Technology Task Force, a particular project has fallen short of accurately representing the church or the participants in the project, the project must be either improved or discarded. In fact, the persons who did the project work will welcome the opportunity to have a review of their work. I have sat in on many production "post mortems" over the years. In the case of professional production those sessions can be

very thorough indeed. In the case of student productions the idea was to be as thorough as possible so that the students had an opportunity to see and actively discuss ways to make their projects even better. The local church should review every project before it is released. That review should be done in the presence of as many of the production team as possible. In this capacity the Technology Task Force functions as executive producer of every project. In this manner the local church provides for quality assurance.

If the review is done in a spirit of gratitude for the effort, then the review experience is likely to be a tolerable experience even when the production needs substantial work. We all have our good days and our not so good days. There will be wonderful productions where the stories, or music, or preaching truly stir the soul. And there will be those times when it is difficult to remain awake or when it is difficult to view the project without wincing every so often. The Technology Task Force and the entire production crew roster need to understand that efforts will not be perfect. But even when we do not get it completely right, as so often was true for the original disciples, we still have the opportunity to learn and to grow. Sometimes God's work gets done when someone says, "You know, I think we need to try this again. We can do better!"

### **Internal Communication**

The congregation will be curious about the work of the Technology Task Force. Media projects and the presence of technology seem to engender curiosity and even excitement. And since the work of The Technology Task Force represents the view of the church and its members that is available to everyone, there should be opportunities to have projects "screened" for the entire church community. There are many ways in which that might be done. Sometimes it is fun to get everyone together in the fellowship



hall and take a look at the latest “just released” project. Someone can bring popcorn! At other times, and if the sanctuary is capable of displaying the work, it might be fun for the pastor to provide a “preview” of a minute or two of the latest effort. The production crew present can be acknowledged and the time and place of an opportunity to see the whole project can be announced.

If the work of the Technology Task Force is made a part of the life of the congregation, the work will soon become an integral part of the ministry of the church. That ministry exists with the other ministries of the church, not more important because it is unique, not less important because it is non-traditional. Before long the careful planning, deliberate budgeting, and personal commitment of the active participants will serve as a sign and signal of what the local church is about. As surely as the sign adjacent to the front door proclaims who the church is, and the warmth of a greeting and a handshake proclaims the love of God, the images and sounds recorded and preserved testify to the promise of future ministry and the continuing glory of the kingdom, honored, cherished, and enjoyed for years to come.

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## Glossary

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
A Roll	The primary roll of recorded material
B Roll	Secondary roll of recorded material, often close-ups
Canned	Completed recording
Credits	Listing of participants in a production, usually at the end
Cut	Editing transition, instant change to succeeding shot
Editing	Process of assembling a production from recorded material
Editing System	Equipment especially configured/designed for editing
Equalization	Method of improving sound quality
Footage	Unedited recorded tape (or film)
Frame	Visible picture area
Garbage	Unwanted visual element in a frame
Light Bar	Set of connected lights for remote production
Master Tape	Final edited version of a production
Meta Tag	Keywords embedded in a web site to aid search engines
Non-linear Editing	Editing using computers for storing the video
Pan	Lateral (left/right) movement of a camera
Remote	Production that takes place outside of a studio
Shoot	To record on tape, also a particular production event
Single	Shot of one primary person or object
Slate	Program information included on tape before program
Synchronous Sound	Sound that matches the picture, e.g. a person speaking
Three-shot	Shot of three persons or primary objects
Tilt	Up/down movement of a camera
Two-shot	Shot of two persons or primary objects
Wild track	Sound recorded separately to accompany a visual

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